

## SUMMARY and FISCAL NOTE\*

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*\* Note that the Summary and Fiscal Note describes the version o-f the bill or resolution as introduced; final legislation including amendments may not be fully described.*

### **1. BILL SUMMARY**

**Legislation Title:** AN ORDINANCE relating to Seattle Public Utilities’ Emergency Assistance Program; temporarily extending increased assistance related to COVID-induced customer delinquencies; and amending Section 21.76.065 of the Seattle Municipal Code.

**Summary and background of the Legislation:** Seattle Public Utilities and Seattle City light each has a program to provide qualifying households without minor children one emergency assistance credit per year and households with minor children two credits per year. For SPU customers, one Emergency Assistance Program (EAP) credit in 2022 is \$477; two credits provide \$954 on emergency assistance.

In the initial stages of the COVID-19 pandemic, the City approved the first of multiple short-term changes to the two utilities’ emergency ratepayer assistance programs under which qualifying households – with or without eligible minor children – may access two credits through the end of 2022. The most recent of these benefit increases expires at the end of 2022. To help low-income customers get their COVID-induced arrears under control, this proposed legislation would extend the benefits to December 31, 2023, enabling income-eligible households without children to access two EAP credits for an additional year.

### **2. CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM**

**Does this legislation create, fund, or amend a CIP Project?**                    \_\_\_ Yes  X  No

### **3. SUMMARY OF FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

**Does this legislation amend the Adopted Budget?**                    \_\_\_ Yes  X  No

**Does the legislation have other financial impacts to The City of Seattle that are not reflected in the above, including direct or indirect, short-term or long-term costs?**  
No.

**Are there financial costs or other impacts of *not* implementing the legislation?**  
Not implementing this legislation would negatively impact SPU’s ability to reduce the number of delinquencies, increasing water shut-offs among low-income customers in 2023.

### 3.a. Appropriations

This legislation adds, changes, or deletes appropriations.

### 3.b. Revenues/Reimbursements

This legislation adds, changes, or deletes revenues or reimbursements.

Use of SPU's Emergency Assistance Program steeply increased in 2020 and 2021 and is expected continue through 2022 and into 2023.

EAP Utilization	2019	2020	2021
Number of households served	634	1,665	2,243
Total assistance	\$244,000	\$932,000	\$1,500,000

The financial impact of this ordinance is difficult to estimate because there are no current data on the composition of households accessing the program and whether they have children. This data was last collected in 2020 when approximately 64% of the households that accessed EAP that year did not have children in the household. If this percentage remains constant, we could expect a 47% increase over 2020 usage of EAP credits from this ordinance. However, given significant migratory and demographic changes resulting from the COVID pandemic, it cannot be assumed the percentage will be the same in 2023 as in 2020.

### 3.c. Positions

This legislation adds, changes, or deletes positions.

## 4. OTHER IMPLICATIONS

- a. Does this legislation affect any departments besides the originating department?  
No.
- b. Is a public hearing required for this legislation?  
No.
- c. Is publication of notice with *The Daily Journal of Commerce* and/or *The Seattle Times* required for this legislation?  
No.
- d. Does this legislation affect a piece of property?  
No.

**e. Please describe any perceived implication for the principles of the Race and Social Justice Initiative. Does this legislation impact vulnerable or historically disadvantaged communities? What is the Language Access plan for any communications to the public?**

This legislation would increase assistance from the Emergency Assistance Program to lower-income households for program/calendar year 2023. People of color, people with disabilities, and historically disadvantaged communities are disproportionately represented in lower-income households, so expanding this program will disproportionately assist these communities.

**f. Climate Change Implications**

**1. Emissions: Is this legislation likely to increase or decrease carbon emissions in a material way?**

No.

**2. Resiliency: Will the action(s) proposed by this legislation increase or decrease Seattle's resiliency (or ability to adapt) to climate change in a material way? If so, explain. If it is likely to decrease resiliency in a material way, describe what will or could be done to mitigate the effects.**

No.

**g. If this legislation includes a new initiative or a major programmatic expansion: What are the specific long-term and measurable goal(s) of the program? How will this legislation help achieve the program's desired goal(s)?**

This legislation would temporarily increase assistance to certain eligible households through the Emergency Assistance Program operated by Seattle Public Utilities. The goal is to reduce the number of low-income households experiencing account delinquency due to arrears accrued during the COVID emergency.

**Summary Attachments:**