



Legislation Text

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File #: CB 120035, Version: 1

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**CITY OF SEATTLE**

**ORDINANCE \_\_\_\_\_**

**COUNCIL BILL \_\_\_\_\_**

AN ORDINANCE relating to the City Light Department; amending terms and conditions pertaining to the emergency bill assistance program and temporarily expanding access to assistance to certain eligible households for a limited time in response to the COVID-19 emergency; and amending Section 21.49.042 of the Seattle Municipal Code.

WHEREAS, on January 31, 2020, the United States Department of Health and Human Services Secretary Alex Azar declared a public health emergency, beginning on January 27, 2020, as a result of the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) outbreak in the United States; and

WHEREAS, the Governor of the State of Washington on February 29, 2020 issued Proclamation 20-05, proclaiming a State of Emergency for all counties throughout the State of Washington; and

WHEREAS, on March 3, 2020, Seattle Mayor Jenny Durkan proclaimed that a civil emergency exists in the City of Seattle; and

WHEREAS, the Governor of the State of Washington, on July 24, 2020 proclaimed a State of Emergency continues to exist in all counties of Washington State and that Proclamation 20-05 and all amendments thereto remain in effect; and

WHEREAS, while the practice of social distancing is critical in mitigating the rate of spread of the COVID-19 virus, it is having significant negative economic effects on the national and regional economy, in particular small businesses and workers in large sectors of the Seattle-area economy who cannot work remotely; and

WHEREAS, on March 19, 2020 the City Council passed Ordinance 126058 suspending interest and late

charges on utility services to assist residents facing financial challenges due to COVID-19; and

WHEREAS, the COVID-19 pandemic has had an adverse financial impact on many City Light customers, many of whom will benefit from a higher level of emergency assistance in 2021; and

WHEREAS, since February 29, 2020, the number of City Light residential customers with balances overdue by more than 90 days has increased to more than 36,000; and

WHEREAS, Revised Code of Washington (RCW) 35.92.020(5) authorizes cities to provide assistance to aid low-income persons in connection with services provided under chapter 35.92 RCW, Municipal Utilities; and

WHEREAS, Seattle Municipal Code Section 21.49.042 authorizes an emergency low-income bill assistance program whereby customers meeting certain criteria may receive a credit against delinquent bills; and

WHEREAS, the Department has determined the best way to distribute federal Emergency Rental Assistance Program funds is to expand the reach of the existing Emergency Low Income Assistance Program;

NOW, THEREFORE,

**BE IT ORDAINED BY THE CITY OF SEATTLE AS FOLLOWS:**

Section 1. Subsection 21.49.042 of the Seattle Municipal Code, last amended by Ordinance 125959, is amended as follows:

**21.49.042 Emergency (~~low income assistance program~~) Bill Assistance Program**

A. An emergency credit of up to 100 percent of a customer's delinquent bills (~~up to~~) not to exceed a maximum credit as provided in subsection 21.49.042.C may be granted by the Department to income-eligible residential accounts, metered for a single household that qualify under the following criteria:

1. Total household income does not exceed 80 percent of the Washington State median income;
- and
2. Have completed (~~an Emergency Low Income Assistance~~) any Department program

application where income eligibility is verified; and

3. Have received a ten-day notice from the Department notifying them that payment or payment arrangements must be made to prevent disconnection or have a past due balance greater than \$250 on an active service agreement. (~~;~~ and

4. ~~Have entered into an agreement with the Department to pay a minimum of 50 percent of the delinquent amount and balance. The emergency credit from this program may be applied to the required payment of the minimum of 50 percent of the delinquent amount.)~~

B. A customer is eligible for the emergency credit once each calendar year, or twice each calendar year if the household includes at least one minor child.

C. In ~~((2019))~~ 2021, the maximum credit shall be ~~(((\$200))~~ \$500. In ~~((2020))~~ 2022 and subsequent years, the maximum credit from ~~((2019))~~ 2021 shall be adjusted annually by the Department to reflect the average ~~((~~ growth) change in electric bills for residential customers.

D. The Department may, at its discretion, require a payment plan for the unpaid balance as a condition of receiving emergency assistance under the program.

E. Between the effective date of this ordinance and December 31, 2021, households qualifying under subsection 21.49.042.A who do not have minor children in the household may receive a second emergency assistance credit within the same calendar year, notwithstanding anything in subsection 21.49.042.B.

Section 2. This ordinance shall take effect and be in force 30 days after its approval by the Mayor, but if not approved and returned by the Mayor within ten days after presentation, it shall take effect as provided by Seattle Municipal Code Section 1.04.020.

Passed by the City Council the \_\_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_, 2021, and signed by me in open session in authentication of its passage this \_\_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_, 2021.

President \_\_\_\_\_ of the City Council

Approved / returned unsigned / vetoed this \_\_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_, 2021.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Jenny A. Durkan, Mayor

Filed by me this \_\_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_, 2021.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Monica Martinez Simmons, City Clerk

(Seal)