



Legislation Text

File #: CB 120328, Version: 1

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 Coronavirus Disease 2019 (“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 due to the outbreak of Coronavirus Disease 2019 (“COVID-19”) in the United States; and

WHEREAS, on February 29, 2020, the Governor of the State of Washington 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, on September 21, 2021, in response to the continued threat posed by the COVID-19 Delta variant, Seattle Mayor Jenny Durkan issued Executive Order 2021-07, ordering the City Light Department (“City Light”) to resume disconnections for nonpayment no earlier than January 15, 2022; and

WHEREAS, The City of Seattle’s disconnection moratorium expired on April 15, 2022, and City Light plans to launch an extensive outreach and engagement campaign to customers with electric bill arrearages; and

WHEREAS, Revised Code of Washington (RCW) 35.92.020(5) authorizes cities 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 COVID-19 pandemic has had an adverse financial impact on many City Light customers; and WHEREAS, the presence of the Omicron variant continues to impact economic activity and recovery in many sectors; and

WHEREAS, the state of Washington has committed \$1 million in state funds for utility arrearages for income eligible customers; and

WHEREAS, more than 17,000 City Light residential customers have an overdue balance greater than \$250 as of March 31, 2022, despite the temporary expansion of access to the Emergency Bill Assistance Program's second bill credit in Ordinance 126493; NOW, THEREFORE,

BE IT ORDAINED BY THE CITY OF SEATTLE AS FOLLOWS:

Section 1. Section 21.49.042 of the Seattle Municipal Code, last amended by Ordinance 126493, is amended as follows:

21.49.042 Emergency Bill Assistance Program

A. An emergency credit of up to 100 percent of a customer's delinquent bills 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 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.

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 2021, the maximum credit shall be \$500~~). In 2022 and subsequent years, the maximum credit (~~from 2021~~) of \$500 shall be adjusted annually by the Department to reflect the average 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. Until December 31, (~~2022~~) 2023, 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.

F. For customers eligible to receive two credits in one calendar year, the Department, at its discretion, may grant one credit exceeding the maximum single credit amount under subsection 21.49.042.C so long as the total amount credited to a customer during a calendar year does not exceed two times the single maximum credit.

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 _____, 2022, and signed by me in open session in authentication of its passage this _____ day of _____, 2022.

President _____ of the City Council

Approved / returned unsigned / vetoed this _____ day of _____, 2022.

Bruce A. Harrell, Mayor

Filed by me this _____ day of _____, 2022.

Monica Martinez Simmons, City Clerk

(Seal)