Governance & Utilities Committee

Expansion of Emergency Utility Assistance Programs

July 9, 2026

Seattle Utility Assistance

Path to Today

- **2026 Statement of Legislative Intent SPU-12S-A-2**
  - Evaluation of expanding the eligibility for the utility assistance to people making 70% or 80% AMI at a lower discount
  - Report emailed to Councilmembers on May 20, 2026
  - June 11, 2026 presentation to Governance & Utilities Committee

Utility Discount Program (UDP)

SCL and SPU offer generous monthly discounts compared to peer utilities nationwide.

60% OFF

50% OFF

or an equivalent credit on the SCL bill if they live in multifamily housing.

Expanding to 60% Area Median Income
in April 2027

Emergency Bill Assistance Today

SCL's Emergency Bill Assistance (EBA)

Up to $1420 in assistance per year for households with children

$710 for households without children

SPU's Emergency Assistance Program (EAP)

Up to $1074 in assistance per year for households with children

$537 for households without children

Available to households with **incomes up to 80% SMI**
($76,548 for a 2-person household in 2026)

Available to households with **incomes up to 80% AMI**
($105,408 for 2-person household in 2026)

SCL's Project Share

Funded by customer donations

Provides a **$250 bill credit**, once per calendar year

Electricity bill   Public Utilities bill

Utility Assistance Expansion

Seattle
Utility Assistance

Why Expand Emergency Assistance Programs?

Expands SCL and SPU's safety net to prevent electricity and water shutoffs

Supports a wider spectrum of utility assistance for households with incomes up to 80% AMI

Complies with Washington State Clean Energy Transformation Act's (CETA) requirement that electric utilities provide bill assistance to households up to 80% AMI

Will help inform future offerings for customers with incomes between 60% and 80% AMI

SPU Emergency Assistance Program Expansion

April 2027: Expand Emergency Assistance up to 80% AMI

- 80% AMI increases access to ~13,000 more SPU direct billed customers
- Customers receive assistance for 4 months of bills – essentially a 30% annual discount
- Doubles the amount of assistance available to the 80% of direct SPU Customers who don’t have children in the home
- Aligns SPU and SCL program policies to reduce customer confusion and streamline administration

For customers below 60% AMI –

When SPU Emergency Assistance is combined with UDP, customers pay *only 33%* of annual water/sewer/garbage bills

Summary of SPU EAP Changes:

	Current Ordinance:	Proposed Legislation:	Impact:
1	Eligibility is ≤ 80% STATE median income	Eligibility is ≤ 80% of AREA median income	• Expands access to another 13,000 individually metered SPU customers • Total eligible SPU customers = ~39,000
2	Metered for a single-family residence	Individually metered residence	• Modernizes SMCs to allow individually metered townhomes and condominiums
3	Maximum assistance amount doubled for households with minors	*All* households have access to the maximum - a fixed amount based ~4 months charges	• Responds to customer and frontline staff feedback after testing this approach during COVID • Doubles assistance available for 80% of eligible customers
4	Maximum annual assistance apportioned out over up to 4 times per year	Maximum annual assistance fully applied when application is approved	• Lowers administrative burden by giving customer assistance up front instead of applying many times each year.
5	Administrative details are in SMCs and not evergreen	Moves program policies to Director's Rules	• Allows program changes to adapt more quickly as customer needs evolve.

SCL Emergency Bill Assistance Program Expansion

April 2027: Expand Emergency Assistance up to 80% AMI

- 80% AMI increases access for ~50,000 more City Light customers in Seattle and surrounding franchise cities
- Customers receive assistance for 4 months of bills – essentially a 33% annual discount
- Helps our most energy burdened customers based on usage
- Complies with the Washington State Clean Energy Transformation Act (CETA)
- Aligns SPU and SCL program policies to reduce customer confusion and streamline administration

For customers below 60% AMI –

When SCL Emergency Assistance is combined with UDP, customers pay *only 25%* of annual electricity bills

Summary of SCL EBA Changes:

	Current Ordinance:	Proposed Legislation:	Impact:
1	Eligibility is ≤ 80% STATE median income	Eligibility is ≤ 80% of AREA median income	• Expands access to another 50,000 SCL customer (households) • Total eligible SCL customers = ~188,000 (households)
2	Annual fixed benefit amount of $710 per household or $1420 per household with children	*All* households receive benefit equal to last two bi-monthly bills up to $1420 annually	• Adapts for energy burden out of customer control (ex. Renter in older building with electric heat, senior in larger single-family home).
3	Maximum annual assistance apportioned out over up to 4 times per year	Maximum annual assistance fully applied when application is approved	• Lowers administrative burden by giving customer assistance up front instead of applying many times each year.
4	$250 past due balance required for application approval	No past due balance required	• Lowers administrative burden and reduces customer effort with reapplying after denial • Aligns with current SPU emergency assistance program
5	Administrative details codified in SMCs and not evergreen	Moves program policies to Department Policies and Procedures (DPP)	• Allows program changes to adapt more quickly as customer needs evolve.

Summary of Expanded Utility Assistance

Utility Discount Program

Expand eligibility from 70% SMI to 60% AMI

- Continues SCL 60% and SPU 50% bill discounts
- Increases eligible population **by 28%**
- Provides an **additional ~$19M** in annual bill discounts

SCL Emergency Assistance

Expand eligibility from 80% SMI to 80% AMI

- Increases eligible population **by 37%**
- Provides an **additional ~$1.5M** in assistance annually

SPU Emergency Assistance

Expand eligibility from 80% SMI to 80% AMI

- Increases eligible population **by 50%**
- Provides an **additional ~$1M** in assistance annually

Questions?

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