

SENATE APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE FISCAL NOTE

BILL NO. Senate Bill 1017

PRINTER NO. 1268

AMOUNT

See Fiscal Impact

FUND

General Fund Restricted Account

DATE INTRODUCED

December 11, 2023

PRIME SPONSOR

Senator Boscola

DESCRIPTION

Senate Bill 1017 amends Title 66 (Public Utilities) providing for comprehensive updates to various sections of Chapter 14 (Responsible Utility Customer Protection). This legislation amends Chapter 14 to include water and sewer authorities in cities of the second class. The bill also updates, expands and clarifies relevant definitions.

Senate Bill 1017 allows an applicant or customer to receive an initial payment arrangement once an applicant or customer has paid the balance of a previous arrangement and any current balance is wholly unrelated to the previous balance. The length of a payment arrangement is extended by one year, or six months in the case of a six-month payment arrangement.

The timeframe for when a public utility must provide written notification of termination is increased from at least ten to 14 days and requires that written notice be sent to the customer by mail. Notice must also be provided electronically if the customer consents to receiving an electronic notice of termination and the utility is capable of providing it. The effective time period of a termination notice is increased from 60 days to 70 days and requires the posting of a termination notice in lieu of attempting to make personal contact when service is terminated.

The duration of a medical certificate is increased from 30 days to up to 60 days. The bill also permits a medical certificate to be renewed if a customer has met obligations to make payments on all current undisputed charges and pays off any undisputed outstanding balance. The Public Utility Commission (PUC) shall determine the minimum payment towards the outstanding balance, which cannot be less than \$10.

The legislation requires a public utility to return or credit a reconnection fee if the applicant or customer enrolls in a utility assistance program and remains enrolled for at least six months. A public utility is required to contact customers with past due notices of 90 days to offer payment arrangements and other resources for which a customer or applicant may be eligible.

This bill expands the Department of Human Services' reporting requirements to send all public utilities with a signed LIHEAP vendor agreement a listing of recipients of LIHEAP or any other public utility assistance. The listing may only be used for qualification and eligibility requirements.

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This legislation permits a city natural gas distribution operation to disclose the amount of any unpaid natural gas distribution service subject to lien or other related costs to a property owner.

This act shall take effect in 60 days.

FISCAL IMPACT:

According to information provided by the Public Utility Commission, Senate Bill 1017 will have no impact on Commonwealth funds.