

MAINE STATE LEGISLATURE

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UTILITIES AND ENERGY

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STATE OF MAINE

SENATE

124TH LEGISLATURE

FIRST REGULAR SESSION

COMMITTEE AMENDMENT "A" to S.P. 43, L.D. 120, Bill, "An Act To Clarify the Criteria for Provision of Assistance to Low-income Customers of Natural Gas Companies"

Amend the bill by striking out the title and substituting the following:

'An Act Regarding Assistance to Low-income Customers of Gas Utilities'

Amend the bill by striking out everything after the enacting clause and before the summary and inserting the following:

Sec. 1. 35-A MRSA §4706-A, as enacted by PL 1999, c. 664, §1, is repealed.

Sec. 2. 35-A MRSA §4706-B is enacted to read:

§4706-B. Assistance programs for low-income customers

1. Programs. Each gas utility in the State that serves 5,000 or more residential customers shall offer low-income assistance programs for residential customers who satisfy criteria for low-income assistance as established by the commission in rule. To the maximum extent possible, a gas utility, in adopting and implementing a low-income assistance program under this section, shall seek to encourage conservation in the use of gas by program participants.

2. Cost recovery. The commission shall include in rates for a gas utility all costs incurred in compliance with this section and commission rules adopted under this section, as long as such costs have been prudently incurred.

3. Rules. The commission may adopt rules necessary to implement this section. Rules adopted under this subsection are routine technical rules as defined in Title 5, chapter 375, subchapter 2-A.

4. Report. The commission shall report on low-income assistance programs offered by gas utilities pursuant to this section within the annual report required under section 120.'

COMMITTEE AMENDMENT

SUMMARY

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This amendment replaces the bill. The amendment requires gas utilities in the State that serve 5,000 or more residential customers to offer assistance programs for low-income residential customers. It requires the gas utilities, in the adoption and implementation of low-income assistance programs, to encourage conservation in the use of gas. The bill provides for the recovery of costs through rates. It authorizes the Public Utilities Commission to adopt rules to implement these provisions and requires the commission to report on low-income assistance programs in the commission's annual report.

FISCAL NOTE REQUIRED

(See attached)



124th MAINE LEGISLATURE

LD 120

LR 426(02)

An Act To Clarify the Criteria for Provision of Assistance to Low-income Customers of Natural Gas Companies

Fiscal Note for Bill as Amended by Committee Amendment "A"
Committee: Utilities and Energy
Fiscal Note Required: Yes

Fiscal Note

Minor cost increase - General Fund

Fiscal Detail and Notes

This bill will require any gas utility with 5,000 or more customers to offer a low-income assistance program for residential customers. At this time, there is only one gas utility company that meets the 5,000 customer threshold and that one already has a low income assistance program in place. Under the bill costs for this program will now be recovered from rates charged to all customers. A report will be produced annually by the Public Utilities Commission (PUC) on the low income program. The additional costs to the PUC associated with this rulemaking can be absorbed within existing budgeted resources.