

CHAPTER 97

AN ACT requiring public and local utilities to provide notice of certain relief measures during the coronavirus disease 2019 pandemic.

BE IT ENACTED *by the Senate and General Assembly of the State of New Jersey:*

1. a. A public utility and local utility shall notify, in a form and manner determined by the public utility and local utility, respectively, each of its residential customers of information and resources available to residential customers concerning public utility and local utility service and bill payment assistance during the coronavirus 2019 pandemic.

b. The notification shall include, but not be limited to, information concerning any:

(1) moratorium in effect on the disconnection, discontinuance, or termination of public utility or local utility service;

(2) deferred bill payment agreement program;

(3) bill payment assistance program;

(4) arrearage forgiveness program; and

(5) moratorium in effect on rate increases or on the imposition of late fees, interest, or liens for late payments.

c. A public utility and local utility shall provide the notification required, pursuant to subsection a. of this section, monthly, in a form and manner determined by the Board of Public Utilities or Department of Community Affairs, as applicable, until 18 months after the date of the termination of Executive Order No. 103 of 2020, which authorized the State of Emergency in response to the coronavirus 2019 pandemic. For a municipality served by a public utility or local utility in which the primary language of 10 percent or more of the population is a language other than English, the public utility or local utility shall provide notification in that other language or languages for use by customers in that municipality. A public utility and local utility shall publish the required information prominently on its website.

d. Nothing in this section shall be construed to permit a local utility to establish or administer a bill payment assistance program not authorized by law.

e. As used in this section:

“Coronavirus 2019” means the coronavirus disease 2019, as announced by the World Health Organization on February 11, 2020, and first identified in Wuhan, China.

“Local utility” means any sewerage authority created pursuant to the “sewerage authorities law,” P.L.1946, c.138 (C.40:14A-1 et seq.); any utilities authority created pursuant to the “municipal and county utilities authorities law,” P.L.1957, c.183 (C.40:14B-1 et seq.); or any municipal, county, or regional utility, authority, commission, special district, or other corporate entity, not regulated by the Board of Public Utilities, that provides electricity, gas, heat, power, sewer, or water service.

“Public utility” means a public utility, defined pursuant to R.S.48:2-13, providing electric, gas, sewer, or water service to residential customers.

2. This act shall take effect immediately.

Approved May 12, 2021.