SENATE, No. 1221

STATE OF NEW JERSEY

219th LEGISLATURE

INTRODUCED FEBRUARY 3, 2020

Sponsored by:
Senator SHIRLEY K. TURNER
District 15 (Hunterdon and Mercer)

SYNOPSIS

Expands Lifeline Credit and Tenants' Lifeline Assistance Programs to include assistance for water utility bill.

CURRENT VERSION OF TEXT

As introduced.

AN ACT concerning utility assistance and amending P.L.1979, c.197 and P.L.1981, c.210.

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

1. Section 2 of P.L.1979, c.197 (C.48:2-29.16) is amended to read as follows:

2. Any residential electric **[**or**]**, gas, or water customer who on July 1 of any year or at any time during the succeeding six months is: a. enrolled in, found eligible for, or, except for the provisions of section 4 of P.L.1975, c.194 (C.30:4D-23), would be eligible for benefits under the program of "Pharmaceutical Assistance to the Aged and Disabled," established pursuant to P.L.1975, c.194 (C.30:4D-20 et seq.), as amended and supplemented; **[**or**]** b. receiving or is eligible to receive benefits under the program of Supplemental Security Income (P.L.1973, c.256, C.44:7-85 et seq.); or c. receiving disability benefits pursuant to the federal Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. s.416(i)) and meets the income and residency requirements of the "Pharmaceutical Assistance to the Aged and Disabled" program, shall be eligible for the "Lifeline Credit Program" established by **[**this act**]** P.L.1979, c.197 (C.48:2-29.15 et seq.).

The Commissioner of **[**the Department of**]** Human Services shall establish a schedule of eligible customers who meet **[**such**]** these qualifications.

(cf: P.L.1985, c.291, s.3)

2. Section 3 of P.L.1979, c.197 (C.48:2-29.17) is amended to read as follows:

3. The "Lifeline Credit Program" shall consist of an annual credit against the electric **[**or**]**, gas, or water utility bill of each eligible residential electric **[**or**]**, gas, or water customer at his principal residence. **[**Such**]** The credit shall be applied to the electric **[**or**]**, gas, or water utility bills of **[**such**]** the customer as soon as may be practicable, but in no case later than the bills issued in October of each year or as soon thereafter as eligibility is determined, and shall be applied to each subsequent utility bill after the first until the full amount of the credit is exhausted. No household shall receive more than one annual credit.

One-third of the total annual credit shall each be applied to the gas, electric, and water utility bills of the customer. In the event that electric and gas are provided to the same customer by the same utility, two-thirds of the total annual credit shall be applied to the

EXPLANATION – Matter enclosed in bold-faced brackets [thus] in the above bill is not enacted and is intended to be omitted in the law.

Matter underlined thus is new matter.

combined bills from such utility. [In the event that electric and gas are provided to the same customer by two separate utilities, half of the total annual credit shall be applied to the bills from each such utility.] The annual credit shall be [$200.00] $200. Subject to the availability of appropriations, the level of credit shall be increased to [$225.00] $225 beginning in October, 1984.
(cf: P.L.1983, c.251, s.1)

3. Section 4 of P.L.1979, c.197 (C.48:2-29.18) is amended to read as follows:

4. Upon certification by the Commissioner of [the Department of] Human Services, the State Treasurer shall pay to each electric [and], gas, and water utility the amount of the credit provided for each eligible residential customer served by [such] the utility. The payments shall be made pursuant to a schedule approved by the Director of the Division of Budget and Accounting and payments made for unused credit shall be returned to the Casino Revenue Fund pursuant to a plan approved by [him] the director. For eligible residential customers receiving benefits pursuant to the program of Supplementary Security Income under P.L.1973, c.256 (C. 44:7-85 et seq.), the credit shall consist of a special State utility supplement to the Supplementary Security Income program and shall be made in 12 monthly installments. If, at the end of a year, a person eligible for the special State utility supplement has not received the full credit for that year, a payment for the balance thereof, shall, upon certification by the commissioner, be issued by the State Treasurer. This special State utility supplement shall be in addition to existing supplementary payments which have been or may be authorized and made pursuant to P.L.1973, c.256 (C.44:7-85 et seq.).
(cf: P.L.1984, c.159, s.1)

4. Section 6 of P.L.1979, c.197 (C.48:2-29.20) is amended to read as follows:

6. The Commissioner of [the Department of] Human Services is authorized to direct each electric [and], gas, and water utility to inform each eligible residential customer of the "Lifeline Credit Program" by separate notice. The commissioner shall approve the content of [any such] the notice. Prior to issuing [any such] the direction to a utility, and prior to approving [any such] the notice, the commissioner shall consult with the President of the Board of Public Utilities.
(cf: P.L.1980, c.92, s.7)

5. Section 7 of P.L.1979, c.197 (C.48:2-29.21) is amended to read as follows:

7. The Commissioner of [the Department of] Human Services shall submit a report on the "Lifeline Credit Program" to the Legislature on August 15, 1981, and annually thereafter. On or after the effective date of P.L. , c. (C.) (pending before the Legislature as this bill), the report to the Legislature shall be submitted pursuant to P.L.1991, c.164 (C.52:14-19.1). [Such] The report shall include, but shall not be limited to, a summary of the implementation of the program, a study of its impact, any recommendations for its revision, and an estimate of the practicability and feasibility of expanding the program to include other needy residential electric [and], gas, and water utility customers. The report shall also include an examination of alternative revenue sources to fund [such a] the program.
(cf: P.L.1981, c.210, s.9)

6. Section 3 of P.L.1981, c.210 (C.48:2-29.32) is amended to read as follows:

3. Any residential tenant not receiving an individual electric [or], gas, or water utility bill who at any time between July 1 and December 31, 1981, or at any time between July 1 and December 31 of any year thereafter, is: a. enrolled in, found eligible for, or, except for the provisions of section 4 of P.L.1975, c.194 (C.30:4D-23), would be eligible for benefits under the program of "Pharmaceutical Assistance to the Aged and Disabled," established pursuant to P.L.1975, c.194 (C.30:4D-20 et seq.), as amended and supplemented; [or] b. receiving or is eligible to receive benefits under the program of Supplemental Security Income (P.L.1973, c.256, C.44:7-85 et seq.); or c. receiving disability benefits pursuant to the federal Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. s.416(i)) and meets the income and residency requirements of the "Pharmaceutical Assistance to the Aged and Disabled" program, shall be eligible for the "Tenants' Lifeline Assistance Program." The commissioner shall establish a schedule of eligible residential tenants who meet such qualifications. For the purposes of this act, "residential tenant" means a person renting or leasing real property, including a mobile home park site, as his principal residence, including a net lease residential tenant, as well as a person who is a resident shareholder in a [nonprofit residential cooperative or mutual housing corporation, both defined pursuant to P.L.1977, c.241 (C.54:4-3.80 et seq.), or an owner of a condominium as such is defined pursuant to P.L.1963, c.168 (C.46:8A-1 et seq.) and P.L.1969, c.257 (C.46:8B-1 et seq.)] planned real estate development, as defined pursuant to subsection h. of section 3 of P.L.1977, c.419 (C.45:22A-23).
(cf: P. L.1985, c.291, s.4)

7. Section 7 of P.L.1981, c.210 (C.48:2-29.36) is amended to read as follows;

7. The commissioner shall submit a report on the "Tenants' Lifeline Assistance Program" to the Legislature and the Governor on August 15 of each year, in conjunction with the annual report submitted on the "Lifeline Credit Program," pursuant to P.L.1979, c.197 (C.48:2-29.15 et seq.). **[**Such**]** The report shall include, but shall not be limited to, a summary of the implementation of the program, a study of its impact, any recommendations for its revision, and an estimate of the practicability and feasibility of expanding the program to include other needy residential electric **[**and**]**, gas, and water utility customers.

(cf: P.L.1981, c.210, s.7)

8. This act shall take effect on the first day of the seventh month next following the date of enactment.

STATEMENT

This bill adds assistance for water utility bills to the Lifeline Credit Program, established pursuant to P.L.1979, c.197 (C.48:2-29.15 et seq.), and the Tenants' Lifeline Assistance Program, established pursuant to P.L.1981, c.210 et seq. (C.48:2-29.30 et seq.).

Under current law, these programs provide a $225 benefit only on gas and electric utility bills to eligible customers who are participating in the Pharmaceutical Assistance to the Aged and Disabled Program (PAAD), receiving or eligible to receive benefits under the Supplemental Security Income program established pursuant to P.L.1973, c.256 (C.44:7-85), or receiving disability benefits under the federal Social Security Act and also meet eligibility requirements for PAAD. Under this legislation, these programs would be expanded to include water utility bills.