

SENATE, No. 2325

STATE OF NEW JERSEY

219th LEGISLATURE

INTRODUCED APRIL 9, 2020

Sponsored by:

Senator VIN GOPAL

District 11 (Monmouth)

Senator TROY SINGLETON

District 7 (Burlington)

Co-Sponsored by:

Senators Turner and Pou

SYNOPSIS

Prohibits electric, gas, or water public utility service discontinuances to residential customers during certain epidemics.

CURRENT VERSION OF TEXT

As introduced.



(Sponsorship Updated As Of: 11/16/2020)

1 **AN ACT** concerning certain public utility service discontinuances to
2 residential customers during certain epidemics and
3 supplementing Title 48 of the Revised Statutes.

4
5 **BE IT ENACTED** *by the Senate and General Assembly of the State*
6 *of New Jersey:*

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8 1. As used in P.L. , c. (C.) (pending before the
9 Legislature as this bill):

10 “Epidemic” means an outbreak of a disease of unusual virulence
11 characterized by very widespread growth or extent, which has a
12 significant impact on this State, resulting in the Governor declaring
13 a public health emergency and a state of emergency.

14 “Public health emergency” shall have the same meaning as
15 provided in section 2 of P.L.2005, c.222 (C.26:13-2).

16 “Public utility” means a public utility, as defined in R.S.48:2-13,
17 that provides electric, gas, or water service.

18 “Public utility emergency” means any condition constituting a
19 potential danger to life, health, or property requiring a public utility
20 to immediately discontinue or interrupt electric or water service or
21 that results in an unscheduled discontinuance or interruption in
22 electric or water service.

23 “Residential customer” means a residential public utility
24 customer of record and, if known to the public utility, any
25 residential tenant of a multifamily residence having two or more
26 units where the owner of that residence is a non-residential
27 customer of record.

28 “State of emergency” means declaration of an emergency by the
29 Governor pursuant to P.L.1942, c.251 (C.App.A:9-33 et seq.).

30
31 2. a. Notwithstanding the provisions of any law, rule,
32 regulation, or order to the contrary, except when a public utility
33 experiences a public utility emergency, a public utility shall not
34 discontinue service to a residential customer for public utility bill
35 nonpayment during an epidemic. A public utility shall resume
36 service, as soon as practicable, during an epidemic, to any
37 residential customer whose service was discontinued prior to the
38 existence of an epidemic and who is located at the same residence
39 where the service was discontinued prior to the epidemic.

40 b. The provisions of subsection a. of this section shall no
41 longer apply upon the Governor rescinding a declared public health
42 emergency and a state of emergency in response to an epidemic that
43 the Governor determines to be no longer in existence.

44 c. A residential customer who does not pay in full a public
45 utility bill on or before the date the bill is due during an epidemic
46 shall be liable for any bill payment balance for service rendered by
47 the public utility once the Governor determines that the epidemic no
48 longer exists.

1 3. This act shall take effect immediately.

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STATEMENT

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6 This bill prohibits an electric, gas, or water public utility (utility)
7 from discontinuing service to a residential customer for utility bill
8 nonpayment during an epidemic, such as during the outbreak of
9 Coronavirus 2019, except when the utility experiences a utility
10 emergency. A utility is to resume service, as soon as practicable,
11 during an epidemic, to any residential customer whose service was
12 discontinued prior to the existence of an epidemic and who is
13 located at the same residence where the service was discontinued
14 prior to the epidemic. This prohibition is no longer to apply once
15 the Governor rescinds a public health emergency and a state of
16 emergency because the epidemic no longer exists. The bill provides
17 that a residential customer who does not pay in full a utility bill on
18 or before the date the bill is due during an epidemic is liable for any
19 bill payment balance for service rendered by the public utility once
20 the Governor determines that the epidemic no longer exists. The
21 bill defines the terms “epidemic,” “residential customer,” and
22 “utility emergency.”