
HOUSE BILL 2234

State of Washington

68th Legislature

2024 Regular Session

By Representatives Ybarra and Couture

Read first time 01/09/24. Referred to Committee on Environment & Energy.

1 AN ACT Relating to energy assistance for low-income households;
2 and amending RCW 19.405.120.

3 BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF WASHINGTON:

4 **Sec. 1.** RCW 19.405.120 and 2019 c 288 s 12 are each amended to
5 read as follows:

6 (1) It is the intent of the legislature to demonstrate progress
7 toward making energy assistance funds available to low-income
8 households consistent with the policies identified in this section.

9 (2) An electric utility subject to RCW 19.285.040 must make two
10 or more programs and funding available for energy assistance to low-
11 income households ((by July 31, 2021)). All other electric utilities
12 must make one or more programs and funding available for energy
13 assistance to low-income households. Each utility must demonstrate
14 progress in providing energy assistance pursuant to the assessment
15 and plans in subsection (4) of this section. ((To the extent
16 practicable, priority must be given to)) A utility may focus and
17 prioritize assistance programs to maximize aid to a subset of low-
18 income households with a higher energy burden. Utility low-income
19 household energy assistance includes one or more of the following
20 programs: Direct bill assistance, support for energy efficiency and
21 space conditioning measures, support for on-sight generation or

1 energy storage systems or both, or implementation of other mechanisms
2 that reduce the amount low-income households expend on energy
3 services.

4 (3) Beginning July 31, 2020, the department must collect and
5 aggregate data estimating the energy burden and energy assistance
6 need and reported energy assistance for each electric utility, in
7 order to improve agency and utility efforts to serve low-income
8 households with energy assistance. The department must update the
9 aggregated data on a biennial basis, make it publicly accessible on
10 its internet website and, to the extent practicable, include
11 geographic attributes.

12 (a) The aggregated data published by the department must include,
13 but is not limited to:

14 (i) The estimated number and demographic characteristics of
15 households served by energy assistance for each utility and the
16 dollar value of the assistance;

17 (ii) The estimated level of energy burden and energy assistance
18 need among customers served, accounting for household income and
19 other drivers of energy burden;

20 (iii) Housing characteristics including housing type, home
21 vintage, and fuel types; and

22 (iv) Energy efficiency potential.

23 (b) Each utility must disclose information to the department for
24 use under this subsection, including:

25 (i) The amount and type of energy assistance and the number and
26 type of households, if applicable, served for programs administered
27 by the utility;

28 (ii) The amount of money passed through to third parties that
29 administer energy assistance programs; and

30 (iii) Subject to availability, any other information related to
31 the utility's low-income assistance programs that is requested by the
32 department.

33 (c) The information required by (b) of this subsection must be
34 from the electric utility's most recent completed budget period and
35 in a form, timeline, and manner as prescribed by the department.

36 (4)(a) In addition to the requirements under subsection (3) of
37 this section, each electric utility must submit biennially to the
38 department an assessment of:

1 (i) The programs and mechanisms used by the utility to reduce
2 energy burden and the effectiveness of those programs and mechanisms
3 in both short-term and sustained energy burden reductions;

4 (ii) The outreach strategies used to encourage participation of
5 eligible households, including consultation with community-based
6 organizations and Indian tribes as appropriate, and comprehensive
7 enrollment campaigns that are linguistically and culturally
8 appropriate to the customers they serve in vulnerable populations;
9 and

10 (iii) ~~((A cumulative))~~ An assessment of ~~((previous funding levels~~
11 ~~for energy assistance compared to the))~~ the energy assistance funding
12 levels needed to meet: (A) ~~((Sixty))~~ 60 percent ~~((of the current~~
13 ~~energy assistance need, or increasing energy assistance by fifteen~~
14 ~~percent over the amount provided in 2018, whichever is greater, by~~
15 ~~2030; and (B) ninety))~~ and 90 percent of the current energy
16 assistance need ~~((by 2050)); and (B) the average amount energy bills~~
17 ~~of nonlow-income households would have to increase each month for the~~
18 ~~utility to provide assistance at the 60 and 90 percent of need levels~~
19 ~~determined in (a)(iii)(A) of this subsection.~~

20 (b) The assessment required in (a) of this subsection must
21 include a plan to improve the effectiveness of the assessed
22 mechanisms and strategies toward meeting the energy assistance need.

23 (5) A consumer-owned utility may enter into an agreement with a
24 public university, community-based organization, or joint operating
25 agency organized under chapter 43.52 RCW to aggregate the disclosures
26 required in this section and submit the assessment required in
27 subsections (3) and (4) of this section.

28 (6)(a) The department must submit a biennial report to the
29 legislature that:

30 (i) Aggregates information into a statewide summary of energy
31 assistance programs, energy burden, and energy assistance need;

32 (ii) Identifies and quantifies current expenditures on low-income
33 energy assistance; and

34 (iii) Evaluates the effectiveness of additional optimal
35 mechanisms for energy assistance including, but not limited to,
36 customer rates, a low-income specific discount, system benefits
37 charges, and public and private funds.

38 (b) The department must also assess mechanisms to prioritize
39 energy assistance towards low-income households with a higher energy
40 burden.

1 (7) Nothing in this section may be construed to restrict the
2 rate-making authority of the commission or the governing body of a
3 consumer-owned utility as otherwise provided by law.

--- **END** ---