

STAFF MEASURE SUMMARY

House Committee On Consumer Protection and Government Effectiveness

Fiscal: Has minimal fiscal impact

Revenue: No Revenue Impact

Action Date: 04/21/15

Action: Do Pass As Amended And Be Printed Engrossed.

Meeting Dates: 03/19, 04/21

Vote:

Yeas: 7 - Buehler, Fagan, Holvey, McLain, Nearman, Rayfield, Stark

Prepared By: Wendy Simons, Committee Administrator

WHAT THE MEASURE DOES:

Requires public utilities to report to Public Utility Commission by November 1, 2015, on processes to mitigate service terminations for certain residential customers during heating season or periods of extreme heat or cold. Requires governing body of each electrical cooperative, municipal utility and people's utility district to submit same report to Oregon Department of Energy by November 1, 2015. Declares emergency, effective upon passage.

ISSUES DISCUSSED:

- Extent to which people at risk of utility service termination are aware of assistance programs
- Struggles of seasonal workers to pay winter heating bills
- Electrical service needs of critically ill, job seekers and people needing mobility assistance
- Assistance programs and payment options currently offered by utilities

EFFECT OF COMMITTEE AMENDMENT:

Replaces original measure.

BACKGROUND:

House Bill 2599-A requires all investor and consumer-owned utilities providing electric or natural gas service to report on their processes for mitigating service terminations for residential customers belonging to a protected class during the heating season, which includes billing periods that include days between December 1 and February 15, and dates for which the National Weather Service forecasts temperatures exceeding 100 degrees or lower than 32 degrees Fahrenheit for 12 or more hours.

Protected classes of customers under the bill include:

- Low income senior citizens
- Active duty members of the U.S. military
- Customers whose household includes a seriously ill individual, a person with a disability or a child under the age of 12 months
- Customers of a household where the primary earner has died in past six months or lost a job within the past six months