

HB 2739 -1 STAFF MEASURE SUMMARY

House Committee On Human Services

Prepared By: Iva Sokolovska, LPRO Analyst

Meeting Dates: 3/31, 4/7

WHAT THE MEASURE DOES:

Establishes the Public Drinking Water and Sewer Ratepayer Assistance Fund in the State Treasury and appropriates \$15 million to said fund in addition to any other appropriations. Directs the Housing and Community Services Department to administer a water and sewer bill payment assistance grant program and allocate funds to qualified organizations, as specified, to distribute assistance to low-income residential households. Directs the Housing and Community Services Department to adopt rules for the administration of said grant program considering all other assistance programs administered by the department.

ISSUES DISCUSSED:

EFFECT OF AMENDMENT:

-1 Directs the Public Utility Commission to establish the amount to be collected and rates to be charged by each electric company from its customers for low-income electric bill payment and crisis assistance.

Mandates that funds collected are paid into the Housing and Community Services Department Low-Income Electric Bill Payment Assistance Fund, specifies provisions.

BACKGROUND:

The U.S. Geological Survey reports that about 86% of the U.S. population relies on a public utility for their drinking water or wastewater services. With 12% of the adult population living below poverty level in both Oregon and the U.S. in 2018, there are some customers that have difficulty paying their water bills. a number of water and wastewater utilities have developed customer assistance programs as an approach to help financially constrained customers maintain access to drinking water and wastewater services.

HB 2739 establishes a Public Drinking Water and Sewer Ratepayer Assistance Fund to distribute water and sewer bill payment assistance to low-income residential households.