

## HB 3459 A STAFF MEASURE SUMMARY

### House Committee On Climate, Energy, and Environment

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**Action Date:** 03/29/23

**Action:** Do pass with amendments and be referred to Ways and Means. (Printed A-Eng.)

**Vote:** 6-4-0-0

**Yeas:** 6 - Andersen, Helm, Kropf, Levy E, Marsh, Pham K

**Nays:** 4 - Levy B, Osborne, Owens, Wallan

**Fiscal:** Fiscal impact issued

**Revenue:** No revenue impact

**Prepared By:** Erin Pischke, LPRO Analyst

**Meeting Dates:** 3/27, 3/29

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#### WHAT THE MEASURE DOES:

Removes language around collection of funds for low-income electric bill payment and crisis assistance for non-payment of utility bills related to SARS-CoV-2 impacts (ORS 757.698). Modifies the amount, from \$10 million to \$5 million, that the Public Utility Commission is required to collect and provide per calendar year for low-income electric bill payment and crisis assistance. Extends the sunset of the low-income electric bill payment and crisis assistance program from January 2, 2024 to January 2, 2026.

#### ISSUES DISCUSSED:

- Provisions of measure

#### EFFECT OF AMENDMENT:

Replaces the measure.

#### BACKGROUND:

The Oregon Energy Assistance Program (OEAP) is an anti-poverty program for low-income eligible customers of Oregon's two largest electric utilities, Portland General Electric (PGE) and Pacific Power. The purpose of the program is to reduce service disconnections for customers at risk of having their electricity shut off. PGE and Pacific Power customers fund OEAP through a small meter charge included on their electric bills. Oregon Housing and Community Services (OHCS) allocates these funds to Community Action Agencies, which then deliver support to eligible customers. After an investigation by the Public Utilities Commission, an agreement was reached to have utilities and customer groups jointly petition the Legislative Assembly to increase the "Low Income Assistance" charge on residential customers' electric bill from \$0.69 to \$1.00.

In 2021, House Bill 2739 increased the low-income electric bill payment and crisis assistance for the Oregon Energy Assistance Program by \$10 million annually for families in marginalized communities that are between 60-80 percent of median income, in addition to serving families at or below 80 percent of median income.

House Bill 3459 A removes language around collection of funds for low-income electric bill payment and crisis assistance for non-payment of utility bills related to SARS-CoV-2 impacts; modifies the amount that the PUC is required to collect and provide per calendar year for low-income electric bill payment and crisis assistance; and extends the sunset of the low-income electric bill payment and crisis assistance program.