

Utility Assistance, Public Service Commission

\$30.0 Million (C90G00.01)

Purpose: Recovery Now Funding

The Public Service Commission shall distribute funds authorized as grants to utility companies to assist households with utility arrearages by reducing those arrearages. Allocations shall be made, first, to eliminate all arrearages for households who have qualified for Office of Home Energy Program Energy Assistance benefits in the past 4 years. Second priority is given to eliminate all arrearages for residential special needs customers and, third, to eliminate the oldest arrearages.

May 19 - Program Highlights and Plans to Allocate Remaining Balance:

- PSC Order No. 89745 issued on February 24, 2021 directed the investor-owned, municipal, and cooperative electric and gas utilities, in consultation with OHEP, to submit data to the Commission by April 9, 2021 regarding residential customer arrearages that may be reduced or eliminated under the Relief Act. Specifically, utilities are to identify -- where applicable -- the following data, accurate as of March 31, 2021: (1) the number of active accounts with unpaid arrearages and total dollar amounts of unpaid arrearages for residential customers that received or were qualified for OHEP benefits at any time subsequent to February 15, 2017 broken out by year and then by county; (2) the number of active accounts with unpaid arrearages and total dollar amounts of unpaid arrearages for residential customers that were special needs customers (as defined in footnote 4 above) within the last 12 months, broken out by county, if possible; (3) the total number of active accounts with unpaid arrearages and total dollar amounts of unpaid arrearages (i.e., 30 days or greater) for residential customers not included in the previous section, broken out by county, and further summed and broken out by the month and year in which the arrearage was accrued; and (4) the utility's total residential load in the State of Maryland, given in MWh and/or Mcf, as applicable.

After review of the above data, the Commission will issue guidance regarding the distribution of funds to the Utilities and the manner in which the Utilities will allocate the funds to its customers with eligible arrearages. The Commission will also establish reporting requirements to verify how the funds were applied.

- The majority of Maryland Utilities responded on April 9, 2021 with the requested information. In addition, some Maryland Utilities provided recommendations on how to allocate the available RELIEF Act funds. This Commission has communicated with those parties who failed to respond timely and all utilities have provided the requested information as of April 16, 2021.
- On April 15, 2021, the Commission issued a notice directing any parties interested in providing recommendations or comments on the allocation and dispersal of the RELIEF Act funds to file comments by May 3, 2021. Furthermore, the Commission provided notice that it will conduct a legislative-style hearing on May 12, 2021.

- The Commission held its legislative-style hearing on May 12, 2021. Based on testimony provided at the hearing, the Commission directed the Maryland Utilities to provide updated arrearage information by May 24, 2021. The Commission Staff was also directed to compile all updated category data by May 27, 2021 for the utilities to confirm its accuracy no later than June 1, 2021.

May 19 - Distribution of Funds:

- None as of May 14, 2021.