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Commission Freezes Disenrollments from Energy Affordability Programs

PSC Action Follows Through on Earlier Efforts by Governor Hochul to Protect Low-Income Customers from Sudden Loss of Energy Services

ALBANY — The New York State Public Service Commission (Commission) today took action to protect low-income customers by adopting an order freezing customer disenrollments in Utility Energy Affordability Programs. On November 13, 2025, at the urging of Governor Kathy Hochul, the Commission paused customer disenrollments in utility Energy Affordability Programs, while approving a number of actions related to the Energy Affordability Programs (EAPs). That order directed the utilities to continue providing assistance to low-income customers during the 43-day Federal government shutdown that ended in November 2025 that resulted in uncertainty of funding for certain EAP-qualifying programs like the Home Energy Assistance Program. That order was adopted on an emergency basis, and today's order makes it final.

"Receipt of federal benefits are used as criteria for eligibility and enrollment in the utilities' EAPs, with some of the utilities specifying a 12-month lookback period to demonstrate receipt of a federal benefit for eligibility in EAP," **said Commission Chair Rory M. Christian.** "Due to the delays in federal funding caused by the federal government's shutdown of operations and its cessation of long-standing energy assistance programs during October and November, and the potential threats to public health, safety, and general welfare if income-eligible customers are disenrolled from utility EAPs, the initial order directed a number of emergency actions, and today's order finalizes those emergency actions."

The major electric and gas utilities, as well as building owners of sub-metered buildings, were directed on an emergency basis to pause EAP disenrollments through November 30, 2026. The utilities were additionally directed to re-enroll any customers who were disenrolled from an EAP on or after October 1, 2025. Further, the Commission directed the utilities to file tariff revisions to extend the lookback period to 18 months for customers to demonstrate EAP eligibility.

In its decision today, the Commission said no purpose would be served by further extending the period within which to consider the temporary rule because no issues have emerged that require reconsideration. Similar to the reasoning in the initial order, the Commission found today the emergency rule should not lapse because such a result would harm low-income households due to factors outside of their control. A temporary pause of disenrollments, and additional flexibility to avoid

or mitigate similar circumstances in subsequent enrollment periods, are appropriate and necessary to protect customers.

The state-funded EAPs provide customers with direct discounts on utility bills, with savings of up to $500 a year. The size of discount varies by utility and is designed to ensure that eligible households do not pay more than six percent of their household income on energy utilities. Bill credits are automatically applied to customer bills when households receive a benefit from the federally funded Home Energy Assistance Program (HEAP).

Because access to state-supported energy affordability programs are largely contingent on enrollment in the federal LIHEAP program that was disrupted by the government shutdown and remains under threat, the Commission took this critical step to protect approximately 1 million New York households from being automatically unenrolled from key state energy assistance programs in the event that the federal programs are disrupted.

Without the earlier action in November announced by Governor Hochul, low-income households receiving energy assistance in New York were at risk. A delay in federal benefits and concurrent loss of EAP bill discounts would make utility services far more expensive for those customers during the winter heating season. The loss of EAP benefits by so many customers at the time when their need for heat is the greatest would undoubtedly undermine public health, safety, and general welfare, thus justifying emergency action by New York State. In recent weeks, temperatures in many parts of the state have plunged below freezing, highlighting the need for heating assistance for families and households statewide.

At the Governor’s direction, during the federal government shutdown Commission staff issued a directive requiring New York’s major utility companies to ensure that any New Yorkers enrolled in EAP will continue to receive their discount through this month, despite the lack of federal funds for the separate HEAP program. Without the Governor’s action, thousands of those households would have automatically lost their November EAP discount, since enrollment in EAP is tied to enrollment in HEAP for many households across the state.

More than 1.5 million New York households currently receive HEAP assistance, and approximately 1 million New York households receive EAP assistance.

Pursuant to State law enacted by Governor Hochul, the Public Service Commission expanded eligibility for utility bill discounts to include households earning up to the State Median Income. The Governor has urged New Yorkers to go to the State's EAP website to check their eligibility and learn how to enroll in the state program as soon as possible. Millions of households are eligible to receive utility bill discounts. Tens of thousands of eligible New Yorkers already enrolled in the program following the Governor’s call in November. Through the state's website, eligible New Yorkers can follow the steps to enroll in the State EAP discount program based on their utility service territory. The state’s website also includes guidance on how New Yorkers struggling with higher heating costs can work with their energy provider to defer payments. It also includes details on how New York State’s laws are holding energy providers accountable and protecting consumers, as well as other key information.

Additional protections exist in New York to protect consumers during the winter heating season. New York State has robust disconnection protections in place for residential utility customers through the New York State Home Energy Fair Practices Act (HEFPA). HEFPA includes special protections and shut off procedures for circumstances where customer health and safety may be threatened by lack of service. Between November 1 and April 15, utility service providers must make a special effort to

communicate with customers to determine whether terminating heat-related service will result in serious impairment to health or safety.

New York offers a robust set of programs and policies to support eligible New Yorkers facing energy-related emergencies this winter. HEFPA provides special protections for consumers with medical emergencies; or who are elderly, blind or disabled; and to all consumers who may encounter health or safety issues due to a shut-off during the cold weather period between November 1 and April 15.

The action taken by the Commission today is also in line with the Governor’s inclusion in her 2026 policy agenda that she will push to streamline planning and administration of the state’s energy assistance programs in a way designed to lower energy bills and make the programs more simple to access. She also said she will improve utilization of the programs by launching a centralized outreach campaign to reach as many New Yorkers as possible.

Today’s decision may be obtained by going to the Commission Documents section of the Commission’s Web site at www.dps.ny.gov and entering Case Number14-M-0565 in the input box labeled "Search for Case/Matter Number". Many libraries offer free Internet access. Commission documents may also be obtained from the Commission’s Files Office, 14th floor, Three Empire State Plaza, Albany, NY 12223 (518-474-2500). If you have difficulty understanding English, please call us at 1-800-342-3377 for free language assistance services regarding this press release.

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