



## NYS Supports Collecting Utility Affordability Data

A.7554-B (Cahill)/ S.5451-C (Parker)

This bill requires the Public Service Commission (PSC) to collect critical data from electric, gas, and water utilities. PSC is also required to produce two reports on the affordability of utility service and host public hearings across the state.

The COVID-19 pandemic demonstrated how important water, electricity, heat, and other essential services are to keeping New Yorkers safe and healthy. However, almost two years into the pandemic, little is known about whether utility services are currently affordable for New Yorkers. Since New York's utility moratorium on utility shutoffs and liens expired last December, utility debt can now provoke shutoffs or foreclosures. In the case of families, utility debt could lead to intervention by child and family services.

The limited data available suggests that economically-struggling families are imminently at risk of losing essential services. Approximately 1.2 million accounts in arrears owed over \$1.7 billion to energy utilities as of September 2021, and nearly 10% of households served by Suffolk County Water Authority were behind on water bill payments as of March 2021. In addition, the NYC Water Board reported water arrears pre-pandemic were estimated at \$370 million which have now nearly doubled.

Without a complete understanding of the scale and extent of the affordability crisis facing New Yorkers, lawmakers cannot effectively develop policies to help customers and utilities recover from the pandemic. This leaves families left to deal with the rising costs of utility bills alone, amongst the long list of other costly expenses families are being burdened with. No family should have to decide between keeping their lights on, getting clean water from their tap, or putting food on the table.

It's time for New York to address the state's growing utility affordability crisis to make sure no New Yorker is ever at risk of losing essential services.

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