

JOINT COMMITTEE ON TELECOMMUNICATIONS, UTILITIES, AND ENERGY

BILL SUMMARY

BILL NO. H.3495

TITLE: An Act promoting resilience against the heat-related impacts of climate change

SPONSOR: Representative Sean Garballey

COMMITTEE: Telecommunications, Utilities, and Energy

HEARING DATE: September 25, 2025

PRIOR HISTORY: New bill (Senate Twin: S.2244, refile)

CURRENT LAW:

Chapter 23B of the General Laws pertains to the Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD).

Section 124F of chapter 164 of the General Laws pertains to the prohibition of shutting off of gas or electric service due to financial hardship during peak heating months for residential customers.

SUMMARY:

Section 1 inserts a new section into Chapter 23B of the General Laws that requires the DHCD, subject to appropriation, to operate a program for low-income cooling assistance. This program shall include but not be limited to assisting with payment of cooling-related electricity and distributing energy efficient cooling appliances. To be eligible for the program, a household shall have income that does not exceed 60% of SMI and priority should be given to households including one or more vulnerable persons.

DHCD is required to administer the program in conjunction with community action agencies and shall coordinate with councils on aging, federally qualified health centers, community development corporations, local housing authorities, and other agencies and service providers who assist the executive office in conducting outreach in the Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program.

DHCD is required to submit an annual report to the legislature summarizing the activities of the program. Further DHCD is required to advertize the program on its website and annually promote awareness of the program by sending a letter or email to households participating in LIHEAP.

Section 2 amends section 124F of chapter 164 of the General Laws by prohibiting gas or electric companies from shutting off gas or electric service to any residential customer who cannot pay an overdue charge because of financial hardship when such gas or electric service is used to provide cooling or operate cooling equipment on:

- any day when the National Weather Service forecast for the following 48 hours covering the area of the gas or electric company in which the residence is located includes a forecast that the heat index will be 95 degrees Fahrenheit or above
- on any day preceding a holiday or weekend when the National Weather Service forecast covering the area of the gas or electric company in which the residence is located includes a forecast that the heat index will be 95 degrees Fahrenheit or above at any time during the holiday or weekend
- any day when the department of environmental protection or the United States Environmental Protection Agency forecasts an Air Quality Index of 151 or above within the service territory of the gas or electric company.

Section 3 requires DPH, in consultation with DHCD, to conduct a study of whether and how to amend the state sanitary code to incorporate maximum temperature requirements for habitable rooms.

Section 4 requires the executive office of public safety and security to establish an extreme heat task force. The task force is required to:

- develop criteria for when MEMA will declare a heat emergency and best practices for statewide, regional, and local response
- create a strategic plan for integrating extreme heat considerations and cooling solutions into existing state programs, policies, protocols, and funding
- develop and annually update the progress made in implementing such a comprehensive strategic plan
- suggest legislative and regulatory changes that will allow for extreme heat and cooling coordination between the commonwealth, municipalities, regional planning agencies, schools, and nonprofits

The task force shall submit its recommendations to the Governor and the Legislature annually on or before December 31st.