

## JOINT COMMITTEE ON TELECOMMUNICATIONS, UTILITIES, AND ENERGY

### **BILL SUMMARY**

**BILL NO.** H.3498

**TITLE:** An Act to expand the low income home energy assistance program

**SPONSOR:** Representatives Homar Gómez & Adam Gómez

**COMMITTEE:** Telecommunications, Utilities, and Energy

**HEARING DATE:** September 25, 2025

**PRIOR HISTORY:** New bill (Senate Twin: S.2289, 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 within Chapter 23B which requires the undersecretary of DHCD to operate a low-income cooling assistance program in accordance with the Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Act, to cover the costs of an eligible household purchasing and installing air-conditioning units and/or ceiling fans and/or box fans up to \$500 total as well as contribute funds to electric bills, if used for cooling.

To be eligible for this program, a household is required to meet the following conditions:

- Household income does not exceed 60% of state median income (SMI)
- The applicant is the homeowner or the applicant provides a written statement from the landlord allowing the installation of a window air-conditioning unit.

Each fiscal year, DHCD is required to dedicate at least 10% of the funds allocated for the purposes of the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) to the program established in this section and these funds will be distributed to all geographic regions of the state with priority to underserved/disproportionately impact areas based on income, housing infrastructure, and climate.

The undersecretary is also required to submit an annual report to the joint committee on housing and the house and senate committees on ways and means that summarizes the activities of this program.

Section 2 replaces Section 124F with a new section that removes the language that ties the prohibition of shutting off service when the service is used for heating purposes. This new section prohibits a gas or

electric company from shutting of service to any residential customer who cannot pay an overdue charge because of financial hardship, regardless of being used for heating or cooling.