

JOINT COMMITTEE ON TELECOMMUNICATIONS, UTILITIES, AND ENERGY

BILL SUMMARY

BILL NO. H.3972

TITLE: An Act providing for utility shutoff protections during periods of extreme heat

SPONSOR: Representative Mindy Domb

COMMITTEE: Telecommunications, Utilities, and Energy

HEARING DATE: June 4, 2025

PRIOR HISTORY: *New bill*

CURRENT LAW:

Chapter 25 of the General Laws pertains to the Department of Public Utilities (DPU).

Chapter 40 of the General Laws pertains to the powers and duties of certain towns. Section 42A of said Chapter 40 pertains to the collection of rates and charges for the supply of water, and liens for delinquent charges.

Chapter 164 of the General Laws pertains to the manufacture and sale of gas and electricity. Section 58A of said Chapter 164 pertains to advance deposits, shut offs for non-payment, and removal of appliances for distribution.

Section 124F of Chapter 164 of the General Laws pertains to the shut off of gas and electricity service during financial hardship.

Chapter 165 of the General Laws pertains to water and aqueduct companies.

SUMMARY:

SECTION 1

Adds a new Section 24 to Chapter 25 of the M.G.L. **directing the DPU to annually publish and make available on its website a report of the information collected pursuant to:**

- The collection of rates and charges for supply of water, and liens for delinquent charges (M.G.L. c. 40, § 42A).
- Advance deposits, shut offs for non-payment, and removal of appliances for distribution (M.G.L. c.164, § 58A).
- Shut offs of gas and electricity service during financial hardship (M.G.L. c.164, § 124F).
- Monthly reports from corporations and companies regarding the number of households that would have otherwise lost water service had the new § 11F of c.165 created in Section 6 of this legislation not applied, as well as the municipalities and zip codes that would have lost

service and the estimated cost to the service provider of providing service that would have otherwise ceased (M.G.L. c.165, § 11F).

Directs the DPU to annually conduct a public information campaign to inform customers of the shut-off protections that exist for financial hardships during the summer months, as well as available payment assistance programs. This campaign will include accessible, multi-lingual web-based educational materials and a robust virtual and in-person statewide outreach program to educate low-and moderate-income communities on the protections available to them.

Directs the DPU to annually collect and report data on its outreach efforts, which will be made available on its website. This report will include information on the outlets used to disseminate information; the location, dates, and number of attendees at in-person outreach events; the languages used in written outreach materials; and the number of people who registered for arrearage management plans following public outreach programming.

SECTION 2

Prohibits **municipalities or water districts** from refusing to restore or intentionally shutting off water service to any resident who cannot pay an overdue charge due to financial hardship between May 15th and September 30th or during a period in which the National Weather Service has issued an excessive heat warning or advisory.

Directs municipalities and water districts to provide the DPU with monthly reports of the following:

- Number of households that would have otherwise lost water service if this seasonal shutoff moratorium did not apply.
- The municipalities and zip codes of households that would have lost service.
- The estimated cost to the water service provider of providing services that would have otherwise ceased.

Directs the DPU to promulgate regulations that establish daily fines for any municipality or water district in violation of this section. Also allows DPU to promulgate other rules and regulations needed to implement this section's seasonal moratorium.

SECTION 3

Prohibits **municipal light plants (MLPs)** from refusing to restore or intentionally shutting off electricity supply service to any customer who cannot pay an overdue charge due to financial hardship between May 15th and September 30th or during a period in which the National Weather Service has issued an excessive heat warning or advisory, when such electric service is used to provide temperature control or otherwise protect residents and their property from weather or climate conditions.

Directs municipalities and MLPs to provide the DPU with monthly reports of the following:

- Number of households that would have otherwise lost electric service if this seasonal shutoff moratorium did not apply.
- The municipalities and zip codes of households that would have lost service.
- The estimated cost to the MLP of providing services that would have otherwise ceased.

Directs the DPU to promulgate regulations that establish daily fines for any MLP in violation of this section. Also allows DPU to promulgate other rules and regulations needed to implement this section's seasonal moratorium.

SECTION 4

Strikes language in M.G.L. c.164 § 124F allowing the DPU to promulgate rules and regulations consistent with said §124F to implement the winter financial hardship shut-off moratorium in place for gas and electric companies between November 15th and March 15th.

This allowance (“may”) is replaced by the directives (“shall”) for the DPU to promulgate regulations establishing daily fines for the shutoff of water and electric service that are outlined in Sections 2, 3, 5, and 6 of this legislation.

SECTION 5

Prohibits **electric companies** from refusing to restore or intentionally shutting off electric service to any customer who cannot pay an overdue charge due to financial hardship between May 15th and September 30th or during a period in which the National Weather Service has issued an excessive heat warning or advisory, when such electric service is used to provide temperature control or otherwise protect residents and their property from weather or climate conditions.

Directs electric companies to provide the DPU with monthly reports of the following:

- Number of households that would have otherwise lost electric service if this seasonal shutoff moratorium did not apply.
- The municipalities and zip codes of households that would have lost service.
- The estimated cost to the electric company of providing services that would have otherwise ceased.

Directs the DPU to promulgate regulations that establish daily fines for any electric company in violation of this section. Also allows the DPU to promulgate other rules and regulations needed to implement this section's seasonal moratorium.

SECTION 6

Prohibits **corporations or companies that provide water service** from refusing to restore or intentionally shutting off water service to any residential customer who cannot pay an overdue charge due to financial hardship between May 15th and September 30th, or during a period in which the National Weather Service has issued an excessive heat warning or advisory.

Directs such corporations or companies to provide the DPU with monthly reports of the following:

- Number of households that would have otherwise lost water service if this seasonal shutoff moratorium did not apply.
- The municipalities and zip codes of households that would have lost service.
- The estimated cost to the water service provider of providing services that would have otherwise ceased.

Directs the DPU to promulgate regulations that establish daily fines for any corporation or company in violation of this section. Also allows the DPU to promulgate other rules or regulations needed to implement this section's seasonal moratorium.