

By: Guerra

H.B. No. 4592

A BILL TO BE ENTITLED

AN ACT

relating to employment and other assistance for certain unemployed individuals owing payment to certain utilities.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF TEXAS:

SECTION 1. Subchapter A, Chapter 302, Labor Code, is amended by adding Section 302.00351 to read as follows:

Sec. 302.00351. EMPLOYMENT ASSISTANCE PROGRAM FOR CERTAIN UNEMPLOYED INDIVIDUALS OWING PAYMENT FOR UTILITY SERVICES. (a) The commission shall establish and administer a program under which the commission provides employment assistance services, including skills training, job placement, and employment-related services, to an unemployed individual who:

(1) is receiving unemployment benefits under Subtitle A; and

(2) has accrued unpaid bills for electric, gas, or water utility services.

(b) An unemployed individual enrolled in the program is entitled to receive service under Section 39.101(i), 104.258(d), or 141.004(c), Utilities Code, or Section 13.152, Water Code.

(c) The commission, in consultation with the Public Utility Commission of Texas, the Railroad Commission of Texas, and providers of services to which Sections 39.101(i), 104.258(d), and 141.004(c), Utilities Code, and Section 13.152, Water Code, apply shall adopt rules for the implementation and administration of this

1 section.

2 SECTION 2. Section 39.101, Utilities Code, is amended by
3 adding Subsection (i) to read as follows:

4 (i) A retail electric provider, power generation company,
5 aggregator, or other entity that provides retail electric service:

6 (1) shall provide each residential customer with
7 information about the employment assistance program described by
8 Section 302.00351, Labor Code, and, on request by the customer, a
9 grace period of at least 14 days to allow the customer to enroll in
10 the program, before disconnecting the customer's service for
11 nonpayment; and

12 (2) for a period of 90 days, for a residential customer
13 enrolled in the program described by Section 302.00351, Labor Code:

14 (A) may not disconnect service or impose late
15 fees; and

16 (B) shall defer collection of the full payment of
17 bills that are due during that period.

18 SECTION 3. Section 104.258, Utilities Code, is amended by
19 adding Subsection (d) to read as follows:

20 (d) A provider:

21 (1) shall provide each residential customer with
22 information about the employment assistance program described by
23 Section 302.00351, Labor Code, and, on request by the customer, a
24 grace period of at least 14 days to allow the customer to enroll in
25 the program, before disconnecting the customer's natural gas
26 service for nonpayment; and

27 (2) for a period of 90 days, for a residential customer

1 enrolled in the program described by Section 302.00351, Labor Code:

2 (A) may not disconnect natural gas service or
3 impose late fees; and

4 (B) shall defer collection of the full payment of
5 bills that are due during that period.

6 SECTION 4. Section 141.004, Utilities Code, is amended by
7 adding Subsection (c) to read as follows:

8 (c) A distribution system retailer:

9 (1) shall provide each residential customer with
10 information about the employment assistance program described by
11 Section 302.00351, Labor Code, and, on request by the customer, a
12 grace period of at least 14 days to allow the customer to enroll in
13 the program, before disconnecting the customer's propane gas
14 service for nonpayment; and

15 (2) for a period of 90 days, for a residential customer
16 enrolled in the program described by Section 302.00351, Labor Code:

17 (A) may not disconnect propane gas service or
18 impose late fees; and

19 (B) shall defer collection of the full payment of
20 bills that are due during that period.

21 SECTION 5. Subchapter E, Chapter 13, Water Code, is amended
22 by adding Section 13.152 to read as follows:

23 Sec. 13.152. SERVICES PROVIDED TO CUSTOMER ENROLLED IN
24 EMPLOYMENT ASSISTANCE PROGRAM. A retail public utility that is
25 required to possess a certificate of public convenience and
26 necessity or a district or affected county that furnishes retail
27 water or sewer utility service:

1 (1) shall provide each residential customer with
2 information about the employment assistance program described by
3 Section 302.00351, Labor Code, and, on request by the customer, a
4 grace period of at least 14 days to allow the customer to enroll in
5 the program, before disconnecting the customer's service for
6 nonpayment; and

7 (2) for a period of 90 days, for a residential customer
8 enrolled in the program described by Section 302.00351, Labor Code:

9 (A) may not disconnect service or impose late
10 fees; and

11 (B) shall defer collection of the full payment of
12 bills that are due during that period.

13 SECTION 6. As soon as practicable after the effective date
14 of this Act, the Texas Workforce Commission shall adopt the rules
15 required by Section 302.00351(c), Labor Code, as added by this Act.

16 SECTION 7. This Act takes effect September 1, 2023.