

STATE OF MAINE

IN THE YEAR OF OUR LORD

TWO THOUSAND TWENTY-THREE

H.P. 923 - L.D. 1427

**An Act to Allow the Public Utilities Commission to Provide Financial Assistance to Low-income Households in Emergency Situations**

**Be it enacted by the People of the State of Maine as follows:**

**Sec. 1. 35-A MRSA §3214, sub-§2**, as enacted by PL 1997, c. 316, §3, is amended to read:

**2. Low-income assistance.** In order to continue existing levels of financial assistance for low-income households and to meet future increases in need caused by economic exigencies, the commission shall:

A. Receive funds collected by all transmission and distribution utilities in the State at a rate set by the commission in periodic rate cases; and

B. Set initial funding for programs based on an assessment of aggregate customer need in periodic rate cases. The funding formula may not result in assistance being counted as income or as a resource in other means-tested assistance programs for low-income households. To the extent possible, assistance must be provided in a manner most likely to prevent the loss of other federal assistance.

The commission may use funds available under this subsection to provide financial assistance to low-income households in emergency situations as determined by the commission in a proceeding or by rule.

The commission may adopt rules to implement this subsection. Rules adopted under this subsection are routine technical rules as defined in Title 5, chapter 375, subchapter 2-A.

**Sec. 2. 35-A MRSA §3214, sub-§6**, as amended by PL 2009, c. 122, §14, is further amended to read:

**6. Annual report.** The commission shall include in its annual report pursuant to section 120, subsection 7 a report on low-income assistance programs established or approved under subsection 2 or 3 and any equitable-treatment program established pursuant to subsection 5. The report must, at a minimum, include:

- A. For each month of the program year, the number of participants enrolled in low-income assistance programs, the number receiving oxygen pump benefits and the number receiving ventilator benefits;
- B. For each month of the program year, the dollar amount of low-income assistance program benefits, the dollar amount of oxygen pump benefits and the dollar amount of ventilator benefits; ~~and~~
- C. An assessment of the effectiveness of the oxygen pump benefit and the ventilator benefit with regard to covering only those electric charges directly related to use of an oxygen pump or ventilator by the program participant; and
- D. An identification of the sources of funds used for low-income assistance program benefits for the program year.