



State of Wisconsin
2023 - 2024 LEGISLATURE

LRB-1609/P1
MPG&MDE:wlj

DOA:.....Rice, BB0417 - Water Utility Assistance Program

FOR 2023-2025 BUDGET -- NOT READY FOR INTRODUCTION

AN ACT ...; relating to: the budget.

Analysis by the Legislative Reference Bureau
STATE GOVERNMENT
GENERAL STATE GOVERNMENT

Water utility assistance program for low-income households

This bill creates a water utility assistance program for low-income households that is administered by DOA. Under the program, low-income households may apply for assistance from the state to help pay the cost of their water utility bills. Although the program is administered by DOA, DOA may contract with a county department, another local governmental agency, or a private nonprofit organization for processing applications and making assistance payments. DOA must establish a payments schedule for the program. If the number of household applicants exceeds the number anticipated to apply, payments to households may be reduced and DOA may suspend additional applications for assistance. Under the bill, a household eligible for water utility assistance may also be eligible for a crisis assistance payment if the household is experiencing or at risk of experiencing a water utility-related emergency, as defined by DOA.

For further information see the state fiscal estimate, which will be printed as an appendix to this bill.

The people of the state of Wisconsin, represented in senate and assembly, do enact as follows:

SECTION 1. 16.293 of the statutes is created to read:

16.293 Water utility assistance for low-income households. (1)

DEFINITIONS. In this section:

(a) “County department” means a county department under s. 46.215 or 46.22.

(b) “Crisis assistance” means a benefit that is given to a household experiencing or at risk of experiencing a water utility–related emergency.

(c) “Household” means any individual or group of individuals who are living together as one economic unit for whom residential water is customarily purchased in common or who make undesignated payments for water in the form of rent.

(d) “Utility allowance” means the amount of utility costs paid by those individuals in subsidized housing who pay their own utility bills, as averaged from total utility costs for the housing unit by the housing authority.

(e) “Water utility assistance” means a benefit that is given to a household to assist in meeting the cost of water utility.

(2) ADMINISTRATION. (a) The department shall administer a water utility assistance program for low-income households to assist eligible households to meet home water utility costs and shall establish a payments schedule for the program.

(b) The department may contract with a county department, another local governmental agency, or a private nonprofit organization to process applications and make payments under the water utility assistance program for low-income households.

(3) APPLICATION PROCEDURE. (a) A household may apply for water utility assistance from the department under the water utility assistance program for low-income households. A household shall apply on a form prescribed by the department.

(b) If by February 1 of any year the number of households applying for assistance under par. (a) substantially exceeds the number anticipated to apply, the department may reduce the assistance payments under sub. (5) made after that date. The department may also suspend the processing of additional applications until the department adjusts assistance amounts payable.

(4) ELIGIBILITY. (a) Subject to sub. (3) (b), all of the following households are eligible to receive water utility assistance under this section:

1. A household with income that is not more than 60 percent of the statewide median household income.

2. A household entirely composed of persons receiving food stamps under [7 USC 2011](#) to [2036](#) or supplemental security income or state supplemental payments under [42 USC 1381](#) to [1383c](#) or s. 49.77.

3. A household with income within the limits specified under par. (b) that resides in housing that is subsidized or administered by a municipality, a county, the state, or the federal government for which a utility allowance is applied to determine the amount of rent or the amount of the subsidy.

(b) The department may establish additional eligibility requirements and other program guidelines for the program.

(5) ASSISTANCE PAYMENTS. Subject to moneys appropriated under s. 20.505 (7) (ee), water utility assistance shall be paid according to the payments schedule established under sub. (2) (a).

(6) INDIVIDUALS IN STATE PRISONS OR SECURED JUVENILE FACILITIES. No assistance payment under sub. (5) may be made to an individual who is imprisoned in a state prison under s. 302.01 or to an individual placed at a juvenile correctional facility,

as defined in s. 938.02 (10p), or a secured residential care center for children and youth, as defined in s. 938.02 (15g).

(7) CRISIS ASSISTANCE PROGRAM. A household eligible for water utility assistance under sub. (4) may also be eligible for a crisis assistance payment. The department shall define the circumstances constituting a crisis for which an assistance payment may be made and shall establish the amount of payment to an eligible household. The department may delegate a portion of its responsibility under this subsection to a county department, another local governmental agency, or a private nonprofit organization.

SECTION 2. 20.505 (7) (dd) of the statutes is created to read:

20.505 **(7)** (dd) *Water utility assistance for low-income households; administration.* The amounts in the schedule to pay program operations costs for the water utility assistance program for low-income households under s. 16.293.

***NOTE: This SECTION involves a change in an appropriation that must be reflected in the revised schedule in s. 20.005, stats.

SECTION 3. 20.505 (7) (ee) of the statutes is created to read:

20.505 **(7)** (ee) *Water utility assistance for low-income households; payments.* As a continuing appropriation, the amounts in the schedule to make assistance payments to eligible households under the water utility assistance program for low-income households under s. 16.293.

***NOTE: This SECTION involves a change in an appropriation that must be reflected in the revised schedule in s. 20.005, stats.

(END)