SENATE BILL SB-24

Introduced by Senator Aisha Wahab (D-10)

An act relating to Energy: affordability and efficiency program.

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

SB-24, Aisha Wahab (D-10). Energy: affordability and efficiency program.

Existing law authorizes the California Public Utilities Commission to regulate public utilities and establish programs relating to energy efficiency, energy conservation, and assistance for utility customers. The existing law also provides programs intended to reduce energy costs for qualifying low-income households.

This bill would establish the California Energy Affordability and Efficiency Program within the California Public Utilities Commission to expand access to energy-efficiency improvements for residential customers experiencing high energy costs. The program would prioritize households that experience a high energy burden and households located in disadvantaged or historically underserved communities.

The bill would require electrical and gas corporations subject to the jurisdiction of the commission to participate in the program as directed by the commission and to coordinate existing energy-efficiency resources to improve access for eligible customers.

The bill would be implemented using existing energy-efficiency program resources and other funds lawfully available to the commission. This bill would not appropriate funds from the General Fund.

Vote: Majority. **Appropriations/fiscal:** yes. **Local program:** yes.

THE PEOPLE OF THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA DO ENACT AS FOLLOWS:

SECTION 1. The Legislature finds and declares all of the following:

The Legislature finds and declares all of the following:

(a) High energy costs place financial pressure on California households, particularly households with limited incomes and households living in older or less energy-efficient housing.

(b) Energy-efficiency improvements can reduce household energy consumption and may reduce long-term utility costs.

(c) Access to energy-efficiency programs should be clear and understandable to residential customers throughout California.

(d) The state should coordinate existing energy-efficiency resources to improve access to cost-saving improvements for households experiencing high energy burdens.

SEC. 2. The California Energy Affordability and Efficiency Program is hereby established within the California Public Utilities Commission.

(a) The commission shall administer the program and establish eligibility requirements and program standards.

(b) The commission shall coordinate with electrical corporations and gas corporations subject to its jurisdiction to implement the program.

(c) The commission shall establish a process through which eligible residential customers may identify available energy-efficiency services and apply for assistance.

SEC. 3.

(a) For purposes of this act, “energy-efficiency improvement” includes, but is not limited to, any of the following:

(1) Weatherization improvements.

(2) Insulation improvements.

(3) Energy-efficient appliances.

(4) Heating and cooling efficiency improvements.

(5) Water-heating efficiency improvements.

(6) Other measures approved by the commission that are reasonably expected to reduce residential energy consumption.

(b) The commission may establish additional categories of eligible improvements based on energy savings, household need, cost-effectiveness, and available program resources.

SEC. 4. Who is Eligibility:

(a) The commission shall prioritize participation for households that meet one or more of the following criteria:

(1) Have a high household energy burden.

(2) Qualify for existing income-based utility assistance programs.

(3) Reside in housing identified by the commission as having significant energy-efficiency needs.

(4) Reside in a disadvantaged or historically underserved community.

(b) Nothing in this section shall prohibit the commission from establishing additional eligibility categories to ensure that energy-efficiency resources are distributed effectively.

(c) The commission shall also prioritize the inclusion of Tribal Households and Lands. Tribal household eligibility goes as follows:

(1) A household located on tribal lands or served by a tribally operated utility system may participate in the program, subject to applicable program eligibility requirements and available funding.

(2) In determining eligibility and prioritizing assistance, the commission shall consider energy burdens experienced by

tribal households, including high utility costs, older or energy-inefficient housing, rural location, and barriers to accessing existing energy-efficiency programs.

(3) The commission shall make reasonable efforts to coordinate information about available program resources with tribal governments and tribally operated utility systems, consistent with tribal sovereignty and applicable law.

SEC. 5.

(a) Each electrical corporation and gas corporation subject to the jurisdiction of the commission shall cooperate with the commission in implementing the program.

(b) Cooperation may include providing customers with information concerning available energy-efficiency programs, coordinating customer enrollment, and facilitating access to approved energy-efficiency services.

(c) The commission shall seek to minimize administrative duplication by coordinating the program with existing energy-efficiency and low-income energy assistance programs.

SEC. 6.

(a) The California Public Utilities Commission shall implement this act using existing energy-efficiency program resources, ratepayer-funded programs, federal funds, and other funds lawfully available for energy-efficiency purposes.

(b) Nothing in this act authorizes the commission to impose a new charge on a residential customer solely for purposes of implementing this act.

SEC. 7.

The commission shall establish program guidelines no later than January 1, 2027.

SEC. 8.

The commission shall submit a report to the Legislature by January 1, 2029, describing program participation, the types of energy-efficiency improvements provided, and available information regarding estimated energy savings and reductions in household energy costs.

SEC. 9.

Nothing in this act shall be construed to limit the authority of the California Public Utilities Commission to regulate electrical and gas corporations pursuant to existing law.

SEC. 10. Protection of Tribal Sovereignty:

(a) Nothing in this bill should be interpreted as giving the California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC) new authority over tribal lands, tribal governments, or utilities owned by tribes.

(b) Participation by a tribal government or tribally operated utility in activities under this act shall be voluntary and shall not be construed as a waiver of tribal sovereignty, immunity, or any other rights or protections provided by applicable law.

(c) Nothing in this act shall require a tribal government or tribally operated utility to submit to commission regulation as a condition of coordinating voluntarily to provide information about available energy-efficiency resources to eligible households.

(d) The commission shall implement this act in a manner that respects tribal sovereignty and applicable federal law.