

117TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

H. R. 551

To amend the Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Act of 1981 to provide for supplemental assistance for COVID–19 relief, and for other purposes.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

JANUARY 28, 2021

Ms. KUSTER (for herself, Mr. WELCH, Mrs. TRAHAN, Mr. GARCÍA of Illinois, Mrs. DINGELL, Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ, Mr. JONES, Mr. BRENDAN F. BOYLE of Pennsylvania, Ms. NORTON, Mr. MCNERNEY, Ms. SEWELL, Mr. TONKO, Mr. CLEAVER, Mr. KEATING, Ms. BLUNT ROCHESTER, Ms. MATSUI, Mr. COHEN, and Mr. BLUMENAUER) introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on Energy and Commerce, and in addition to the Committee on Education and Labor, for a period to be subsequently determined by the Speaker, in each case for consideration of such provisions as fall within the jurisdiction of the committee concerned

A BILL

To amend the Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Act of 1981 to provide for supplemental assistance for COVID–19 relief, and for other purposes.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

3 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

4 This Act may be cited as the “Energy Debt Relief
5 for American Families Act”.

1 **SEC. 2. ENERGY DEBT RELIEF FOR AMERICAN FAMILIES**
2 **PROGRAM.**

3 (a) AUTHORIZATION.—Section 2602 of the Low-In-
4 come Home Energy Assistance Act of 1981 (42 U.S.C.
5 8621) is amended by adding at the end the following:

6 “(f) There is authorized to be appropriated for pay-
7 ments under this title, in addition to amounts appro-
8 priated for distribution to all the States in accordance with
9 section 2604 or to carry out section 2607A,
10 \$10,000,000,000 for allocation to States under section
11 2607C.”.

12 (b) SUPPLEMENTAL ALLOTMENTS FOR COVID–19
13 RELIEF.—The Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Act
14 of 1981 (42 U.S.C. 8621 et seq.) is amended by inserting
15 after section 2607B the following:

16 **“SEC. 2607C. SUPPLEMENTAL ALLOTMENTS FOR COVID–19**
17 **RELIEF.**

18 “(a) ALLOTMENT OF FUNDS.—The Secretary may
19 allocate amounts appropriated under section 2602(f) to
20 provide supplementary funds to States to assist eligible
21 households in accordance with this section.

22 “(b) FORMULA FOR DISTRIBUTION.—Distribution of
23 amounts made available under this section shall be based
24 on a formula developed by the Secretary that provides
25 funding to States based on—

1 “(1) the amount allotted to the State under this
2 title, other than section 2607A, in fiscal year 2021;
3 and

4 “(2) the average unemployment rate in the
5 State from January 31, 2020, through December
6 31, 2020.

7 “(c) USE OF FUNDS.—

8 “(1) ASSISTANCE.—A State may use funds allo-
9 cated to the State under this section to help eligible
10 households in the State maintain home energy or
11 electricity service, by providing to such households,
12 in accordance with the plan submitted by the State
13 under paragraph (2), 100 percent of the amount of
14 any utility bill incurred during the COVID–19 pan-
15 demic that is in arrears.

16 “(2) PLAN FOR DISBURSEMENT.—Not later
17 than 60 days after the date of enactment of this sec-
18 tion, each State shall submit to the Secretary a plan
19 for providing assistance under paragraph (1) that
20 prioritizes the restoration of terminated service and
21 the prevention of service terminations, taking into
22 consideration the total amount of debt in arrears of
23 eligible households and any other factors that the
24 State finds relevant.

1 “(3) ADMINISTRATIVE EXPENSES.—A State
2 may use not more than 15 percent of funds allocated
3 to the State under this section for administrative ex-
4 penses related to providing assistance under para-
5 graph (1).

6 “(d) DEFINITIONS.—In this section:

7 “(1) ELIGIBLE HOUSEHOLD.—The term ‘eligi-
8 ble household’ means a household with a utility bill
9 incurred during the COVID–19 pandemic that cer-
10 tifies to the State (including through proof of job
11 loss of a member of the household, such as a layoff
12 or furlough notice or verification of application for
13 unemployment benefits) that it cannot pay such util-
14 ity bill because of economic distress caused by the
15 COVID–19 pandemic.

16 “(2) UTILITY BILL.—The term ‘utility bill’
17 means a bill charged to a household for home energy
18 or electricity service.

19 “(3) UTILITY BILL INCURRED DURING THE
20 COVID–19 PANDEMIC.—The term ‘utility bill incurred
21 during the COVID–19 pandemic’ means a utility bill
22 for service provided during the period during which
23 the public health emergency declared by the Sec-
24 retary of Health and Human Services under section
25 319 of the Public Health Service Act (42 U.S.C.

1 247d) on January 31, 2020, with respect to
2 COVID–19 (or any renewal of that declaration), is
3 in effect.

4 “(e) TERMINATION.—

5 “(1) DATE.—The authority of the Secretary to
6 allocate funds under this section, and the authority
7 of a State to use such funds under subsection (c),
8 shall expire on the date that is 1 year after the date
9 of enactment of this section.

10 “(2) REMAINING FUNDS.—

11 “(A) UNALLOCATED FUNDS.—The Sec-
12 retary may not allocate or otherwise use any
13 funds appropriated under section 2602(f) that
14 have not been allocated under this section by
15 the date described in paragraph (1).

16 “(B) UNUSED FUNDS.—A State to which
17 funds have been allocated under this section
18 shall use any such funds, which have not been
19 used under subsection (c) by the date described
20 in paragraph (1), in the same manner as
21 amounts allotted to the State under section
22 2604.”.

23 “(c) REPORT.—Not later than 2 years after the date
24 of enactment of this Act, the Secretary of Health and

1 Human Services shall submit to Congress a report describ-
2 ing—

3 (1) the number of households in each State that
4 received assistance under subsection (c)(1) of section
5 2607C of the Low-Income Home Energy Assistance
6 Act of 1981, and demographic information for such
7 households, to the extent such information is avail-
8 able;

9 (2) the total amount of assistance provided to
10 households in each State under such subsection
11 (c)(1);

12 (3) the total amount of funds used by States
13 under subsection (c)(3) of such section 2607C; and

14 (4) any other information relating to the imple-
15 mentation and effectiveness of such section, as de-
16 termined appropriate by the Secretary.

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