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**Governor Phil Murphy**

# Governor Murphy Signs Legislation Extending Utility Shutoff Grace Period for Water and Sewer Customers

12/22/2021

*Legislation Also Provides Additional Protections for Those Facing Utility Shutoffs*

**TRENTON** – Governor Phil Murphy yesterday signed S4081, extending the utility shutoff grace period established under Executive Order No. 246 from December 31, 2021, to March 15, 2022, for all water, municipal electric, and sewer customers. The legislation also extends the payment plan provisions of Executive Order No. 246, requiring all utilities to offer a 12-month, no down payment, interest-free payment plan to customers prior to disconnecting service or imposing liens for non-payment of arrearages that had accrued since the beginning of the public health emergency. Further, the legislation requires the Department of Community Affairs to establish a Winter Termination Program for customers of water, sewer, and electric municipal utilities and local authorities, and requires the New Jersey Board of Public Utilities to include water and sewer public utilities in its existing Winter Termination Program. These programs, which will take effect for the 2022-2023 winter season, will protect customers who are eligible for certain public assistance programs or are unable to pay their bills due circumstances beyond their control from utility disconnections between November 15 and March 15.

“The COVID-19 pandemic has impacted many of our New Jersey families who are working hard to get their finances in order after a particularly difficult two years,” **said Governor Murphy**. “Through our extension of the utility shutoff grace period, we are giving customers an additional opportunity to work with their utility provider to enroll in an equitable payment option that ensures their critical, and in some cases life-preserving, services remain in operation.”

“While many of us are returning to a sense of normalcy, there are many households that are still struggling as a result of the pandemic,” **said Lt. Governor Sheila Y. Oliver, who also serves as the Commissioner of the Department of Community Affairs**. “This extension will provide a buffer for families that still have arrears and allow additional time for them to work out a payment plan. No one should have to choose between paying their utilities and paying for other necessities such as food, housing, and medication. This Administration recognizes that this need still exists and is committed to implementing measures to help New Jersey families.”

Primary sponsors of the legislation include Senators Nilsa Cruz-Perez and Shirley Turner, as well as Assemblywomen Annette Quijano and Verlina Reynolds-Jackson.

“The COVID-19 pandemic has made life incredibly difficult for many individuals. Financially, many New Jerseyans are still recovering from mass layoffs. As utility bill payments and the holidays approach, many individuals may face water and sewer disconnection if they are unable to pay their bill in time,” **said Senator Nilsa Cruz-Perez**. “The goal of this law is to give individuals an extended grace period to be able to pay those bills without the threat of losing their water.”

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“Even though the public health emergency has ended, many people are still getting back on their feet and need additional support,” **said Assemblymembers Annette Quijano and Verlina Reynolds-Jackson.** “This law will give people more time to make utility payments and will allow families to focus on everyday decisions without having to worry about their water shutting off. Having reliable utility services is a necessity for every New Jersey resident.

“The legislation signed by the Governor is a common sense solution to what has been a very difficult issue as New Jerseyans continue to deal with the economic fallout of the pandemic,” **said NJBPU President Joseph L. Fiordaliso.** “Expanding Winter Termination Protections to new sectors means more households will have the opportunity to contact their utilities to set up a payment plan or to apply for one of the many assistance programs the state has available.”

## Governor Phil Murphy

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