



Retired Public Employees Association

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Representing the interests of 500,000 New York state and local government retirees

MEMORANDUM IN SUPPORT

S.4548, by Senator Parker
A.4876, by Member of Assembly Solages

An act to amend the social services law, in relation to providing for the automated identification of affordability program participants.

The Retired Public Employees Association, representing the interests of public sector retirees, supports this bill and urges that it be passed.

The bill would require the state Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance to generate lists of beneficiaries who are also eligible for utility companies' affordability programs and share that data with the utilities. New York City already matches benefits data in this way. This legislation would standardize this process statewide, with all utilities participating.

New Yorkers who receive federal Home Energy Assistance Program (HEAP) grants, which are paid directly to their utility on the customer's behalf, are automatically enrolled in their gas and electric utility company's own Energy Assistance Programs (EAP). Other residents who may meet eligibility requirements are not receiving assistance because they are unaware and, hence, have not signed up.

Of the estimated 1.2 million New York households who are behind on their utility bill, most certainly some are retired public employees. Contrary to popular perception, 24% of retirees in the State and Local Retirement System receive a pension under \$10,000. These older retirees, like all New Yorkers, have struggled under the economic effects of the pandemic and inflation, especially rising utility costs.

The creation of an automated process will ensure that New Yorkers who are eligible for assistance receive assistance. RPEA urges that the bill be adopted.