

1 S.305

2 Representative Stebbins of Burlington proposes that the House Committee
3 on Environment and Energy amend the bill by adding a new reader assistance
4 and Sec. X to read as follows:

5 * * * Energy Cost Stabilization Study * * *

6 Sec. X. ENERGY COST STABILIZATION STUDY

7 (a) The General Assembly finds:

8 (1) Energy generation and consumption is in a state of transition,
9 shifting towards beneficial, strategic electrification using efficiency,
10 renewables, storage, and flexible demand management.

11 (2) There is an increasing understanding of energy burden that is
12 measured in terms of the percentage of household income that is spent on
13 energy costs.

14 (3) Total energy costs are a result of multiple expenditures such as
15 electricity costs, transportation costs, and building heating and cooling costs.

16 (4) As energy consumption shifts from fossil fuels to electricity,
17 electricity costs may increase but total energy costs (including transportation
18 and building heating and cooling costs) are expected to decrease.

19 (5) There are various income-sensitive programs available to Vermont
20 households that assist with energy costs.

1 (6) With the passage of 2020 Act No. 153, the Vermont Global
2 Warming Solutions Act, and 2022 Act No. 154, an act relating to
3 environmental justice in Vermont, it is time to review current energy cost
4 stabilization programs and assess what changes, if any, are necessary.

5 (b) The Public Utility Commission shall study current and potential future
6 programs and initiatives focused on reducing or stabilizing energy costs for
7 low- or moderate-income households and shall make a determination as to
8 whether a statewide program to reduce energy burden is needed in Vermont.
9 In conducting its analysis, the Commission shall take into consideration a
10 comprehensive approach that recognizes electric costs might rise but that total
11 energy costs are expected to decrease because of increased electrification,
12 efficiency, storage, and demand response activities. The Commission shall
13 submit a written report of its findings and recommendations to the General
14 Assembly on or before December 1, 2025.

15 (c) In conducting the study required by this section, the Commission shall
16 seek input from interested stakeholders, including the Department of Public
17 Service, the Agency of Human Services, the Agency of Transportation, the
18 statewide efficiency utility, electric distribution utilities, residential customers,
19 low-income program representatives, consumer-assistance program
20 representatives, statewide environmental organizations, environmental justice
21 entities, at least one low-income cost reduction program participant, at least

1 one moderate-income cost reduction program participant, and any other
2 stakeholders identified by the Commission.

3 (d)(1) As part of its study, the Commission shall assess current programs
4 within and outside Vermont designed to directly reduce or stabilize energy
5 expenditures for low- or moderate-income households and shall seek to
6 identify successful design elements of each. In particular, the Commission
7 shall assess:

8 (A) Vermont low-income electric energy cost reduction programs;

9 (B) statewide energy cost reduction programs currently available
10 outside Vermont; and

11 (C) Vermont programs available to low- and moderate-income
12 households that are designed to reduce transportation, thermal, or electric
13 energy costs, including through investments in efficiency or electrification
14 measures.

15 (2) In assessing existing programs, the Commission shall take into
16 consideration and develop findings regarding each program's:

17 (A) funding model and funding source;

18 (B) eligibility requirements;

19 (C) process for making and monitoring eligibility determinations;

20 (D) administrative structure;

1 (E) efficacy in terms of eligibility, customer participation, funding,
2 program offerings, and coordination with other programs, and where there
3 might be opportunities for program improvement, particularly regarding
4 administrative savings and efficiencies and universality of access; and

5 (F) ability to assist the State with achieving its greenhouse gas
6 reduction requirements in a manner that is consistent with State policy on
7 environmental justice.

8 (e) The report required by this section shall include the following:

9 (1) Recommendations as to how existing programs may better
10 coordinate to ensure low- and moderate-income Vermonters are reducing their
11 total energy consumption and costs.

12 (2) If applicable, identification of obstacles and recommended solutions
13 for increasing coordination across electric, thermal, and transportation energy
14 cost reduction programs, including through the sharing of best practices and
15 program design and implementation successes.

16 (3) A recommendation as to whether existing programs should continue
17 to operate and align with a new statewide program or, instead, transition
18 eligible customers to a statewide program and otherwise cease operations.

19 (4) A recommendation regarding the most appropriate financing
20 mechanism for a statewide energy cost stabilization program if such a program
21 is recommended and, in addition, recommendations regarding:

- 1 (A) eligibility requirements, which may be based on income,
- 2 participation in other public assistance programs, or other potential approach;
- 3 (B) a process for making and monitoring eligibility determinations;
- 4 and
- 5 (C) any other matters deemed appropriate by the Commission.