

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

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

20 (d)(1) As part of its study, the Commission shall assess current programs
21 within and outside Vermont designed to directly reduce or stabilize energy

1 expenditures for low- or moderate-income households and shall seek to
2 identify successful design elements of each. In particular, the Commission
3 shall assess:

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

5 (B) statewide energy cost reduction programs currently available
6 outside Vermont; and

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

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

13 (A) funding model and funding source;

14 (B) eligibility requirements;

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

16 (D) administrative structure;

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

18 (A) eligibility requirements, which may be based on income,
19 participation in other public assistance programs, or other potential approach;

20 (B) a process for making and monitoring eligibility determinations;
21 and

1 (C) any other matters deemed appropriate by the Commission.