

# SENATE BILL NO. 344

March 25, 2021, Introduced by Senators ALEXANDER, BAYER, HOLLIER, GEISS, ANANICH, MOSS, BRINKS and MCCANN and referred to the Committee on Environmental Quality.

A bill to amend 1939 PA 280, entitled  
"The social welfare act,"  
(MCL 400.1 to 400.119b) by adding sections 14n, 14o, 14p, and 14q.

**THE PEOPLE OF THE STATE OF MICHIGAN ENACT:**

1           **Sec. 14n. As used in this section and sections 14o to 14r:**

2           **(a) "Eligible customer" means a provider's customer whose**  
3 **household income does not exceed 200% of the federal poverty**  
4 **guidelines or who meets any of the following requirements:**

5           **(i) Has received assistance from a state emergency relief**

1 program within the past year.

2 (ii) Receives food assistance under the federal Supplemental  
3 Nutrition Assistance Program administered by this state.

4 (iii) Receives medical assistance administered under this act.

5 (iv) Receives any other form of federal or state public  
6 assistance.

7 (b) "Low-income water residential affordability program" means  
8 the low-income water residential affordability program created in  
9 section 14o.

10 (c) "Nonaffordability application" means a form that the  
11 department must develop to trigger an income eligibility review for  
12 the low-income water residential affordability program. The  
13 nonaffordability application must include the option of  
14 authorization for release of the customer's information to the  
15 provider.

16 (d) "Provider" means any water and sewerage system that  
17 provides water or sewerage service in this state.

18 (e) "Task force" means the task force created in section 14q.

19 Sec. 14o. (1) The low-income water residential affordability  
20 program is created within the department to address reduction or  
21 retiring of water and sewerage bill arrearages and to ensure that  
22 an eligible customer's monthly water and sewerage bill is based on  
23 the eligible customer's household income. The department shall  
24 develop and administer the low-income water residential  
25 affordability program created under this section.

26 (2) Not later than 30 days after the department receives a  
27 signed nonaffordability application, the department shall complete  
28 an income eligibility review to determine if the individual meets  
29 the eligibility requirement for the low-income water residential

1 affordability program. The department shall determine eligibility  
2 for the low-income water residential affordability program using  
3 the same process by which it determines eligibility for cash  
4 assistance under this act. The department shall immediately notify  
5 the provider it has begun the eligibility review and that the  
6 provider shall not pursue shutoff during the review. The department  
7 shall send notification to the applicant and the provider about the  
8 results of the eligibility review promptly once that review is  
9 completed.

10 (3) In addition to any other verification of income accepted  
11 by the department, the department may accept a federal income tax  
12 return as documentation of income. When applicable, the department  
13 must use publicly available information regarding standard benefit  
14 amounts for supplemental security income and temporary assistance  
15 for needy families. An applicant has no obligation to provide  
16 confirmation of the amount of benefits he or she receives from  
17 supplemental security income and temporary assistance to needy  
18 families.

19 (4) If, upon the department's determination of the  
20 individual's household income, the department finds that the  
21 individual is an eligible customer, the department shall provide  
22 that information, as well as the eligible customer's household  
23 income, to that eligible customer's provider. Upon receipt of the  
24 information from the department under this subsection, the eligible  
25 customer's provider shall charge the eligible customer a rate that  
26 is affordable based on the eligible customer's household income as  
27 determined by the department. Alternatively, the department may  
28 provide a subsidy to the eligible customer based on the  
29 department's determination of the eligible customer's household

1 income.

2 (5) The department shall inform the individual of the  
3 determination of whether or not he or she is an eligible customer.  
4 If the individual is an eligible customer, the department shall  
5 provide him or her with information regarding the low-income water  
6 residential affordability program and the rate to be charged by the  
7 provider.

8 Sec. 14p. (1) Each provider shall give notice to its customers  
9 regarding the availability of the low-income water residential  
10 affordability program and the process to apply for that program.  
11 The notice required under this subsection must be given to each  
12 customer in writing at least 1 time per year and by posting on the  
13 provider's website.

14 (2) The department must inform all individuals receiving  
15 services from the department regarding the availability of the low-  
16 income water residential affordability program and the process to  
17 apply for that program.

18 Sec. 14q. (1) Not later than 30 days after the effective date  
19 of the amendatory act that added this section, the department shall  
20 create a low-income water residential affordability program task  
21 force.

22 (2) The department director shall appoint members of the task  
23 force that include, but are not limited to, representatives of  
24 providers and water and sewerage customer advocacy groups.

25 (3) The task force shall do all of the following:

26 (a) Discuss, and advise the department on, best practices for  
27 administering the low-income water residential affordability  
28 program.

29 (b) By no later than March 1, 2022, create a plan for the low-

1 income water residential affordability program that is based on  
2 household income, that addresses water and sewerage bill  
3 arrearages, and that includes, but is not limited to, funding and  
4 coordination of voluntary check-off contributions with providers.  
5 The department shall implement this plan no later than October 1,  
6 2022.

7 Enacting section 1. This amendatory act does not take effect  
8 unless all of the following bills of the 101st Legislature are  
9 enacted into law:

10 (a) Senate Bill No. 343.

11

12 (b) Senate Bill No.\_\_\_\_ or House Bill No.\_\_\_\_ (request no.  
13 02535'21).