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ORIGINAL

Bill Number:HB2136Patron:Keys-GamarraBill Title:Office of the Public Utility Ombudsman; established.

Bill Summary: Requires the State Corporation Commission to establish the Office of the Public Utility Ombudsman to protect the interests of residential customers of public utilities. The bill requires the Office of the Public Utility Ombudsman to (i) receive, review, and attempt to resolve any complaints from residential customers regarding public utilities; (ii) assist residential customers in understanding their rights and responsibilities under the terms of any agreement with a public utility; (iii) assist residential customers who are facing a cessation of service due to the dissolution of a public utility; (iv) assist residential customers who are facing a potential enforcement action initiated by the Commission or Commission staff; (v) in conjunction with complaint and inquiry data maintained by the Commission or by a public utility, maintain data on inquiries received, the types of assistance requested, any actions taken, and the disposition of each such matter; (vi) assist residential customers in using the procedures and processes available to them through their public utility or the Commission; (vii) ensure that residential customers have access to the services provided through the Office of the Public Utility Ombudsman and that the residential customers receive timely responses from the representatives of the Office of the Public Utility Ombudsman to the inquiries; and (viii) carry out activities as the Commission determines to be appropriate.

Budget Amendment Necessary:YesItems Impacted:476 (NGF 02080)Explanation:Indeterminate

Fiscal Summary: The State Corporation Commission anticipates that this bill may necessitate three additional full-time staff should the intended scope of the bill increase the scope of the existing duties of the Division of Public Utility Regulation.

General Fund Expenditure Impact: None

Nongeneral Fund Expenditure Impact:

Agency	<u>FY2025</u>	FY2026	FY2027	<u>FY2028</u>	FY2029	<u>FY2030</u>
SCC (17100)		\$268,000	\$242,000	\$242,000	\$242,000	\$242,000
TOTAL		\$268,000	\$242,000	\$242,000	\$242,000	\$242,000
Position Impact: <u>Agency</u>	<u>FY2025</u>	<u>FY2026</u>	<u>FY2027</u>	<u>FY2028</u>	<u>FY2029</u>	<u>FY2030</u>
SCC (17100)		3				
TOTAL		3				

State Corporation Commission 2025 General Assembly Session State Fiscal Impact Statement

Fiscal Analysis: This bill creates an Office of the Public Utility Ombudsmen within the State Corporation Commission. Although the duties identified appear to largely align with existing duties of the Division of Public Utility Regulation, Staff has some uncertainty related to the scope of the bill, including, whether the bill language as introduced intends to include both jurisdictional and/or non-jurisdictional customer complaints. Accordingly, Staff is noting that this estimate is indeterminate and is identifying the potential need for three full-time employees (FTEs) to accommodate the potential increase in workload.

The SCC costs to implement the requirements in this bill will impact its Public Utility Fund (02080). The current rate cap authorization (58.1-2900) as approved by the General Assembly (GA) is not sufficient to generate the revenue needed for the Fund to cover the costs of this bill's requirements. However, bills HB2663 and SB1336 have been introduced in the 2025 GA session to adjust electric consumption rate caps to fund SCC existing expenses and potential new expenses from electric utility SCC oversight legislation passed during the 2025 GA Session. The costs associated with HB2136 can be absorbed from the revenue that would result from the passage of HB2663/SB1336.

Other: None