State Corporation Commission 2025 General Assembly Session State Fiscal Impact Statement

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Bill Number: HB2136 ER **Patron:** Keys-Gamarra

Bill 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 Office of the Public Utility Ombudsman shall serve (i) residential customers of public utilities that are jurisdictional or of limited jurisdiction and (ii) residential customers who cannot be assisted by other Commission staff due to a potential conflict of interest.

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.

The bill has a delayed effective date of July 1, 2026.

Budget Amendment Necessary: No **Items Impacted:** 476 (NGF 02080)

Explanation: With the delayed effective date of July 1, 2026, no budget amendment is needed for the 24-

26 Biennium.

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

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Nongeneral Fund Expenditure Impact:

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

Position Impact:

Agency	FY2025	FY2026	FY2027	FY2028	FY2029	FY2030
SCC (17100)			3	3	3	3
TOTAL			3	3	3	3

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, this bill adds at least one additional utility as well as some new responsibilities. Accordingly, Staff is identifying the potential need for up to three full-time employees (FTEs) to accommodate the potential increase in workload in assisting residential customers.

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, enrolled bills HB2663 and SB1336 adjust the 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