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HOUSE BILL NO. 1002

AMENDMENT IN THE NATURE OF A SUBSTITUTE
(Proposed by the House Committee on Labor and Commerce
on _____)

(Patron Prior to Substitute—Delegate Tran)

A BILL to amend and reenact § 56-245.1:4 of the Code of Virginia, relating to certain utilities; notice procedures for nonpayment.

Be it enacted by the General Assembly of Virginia:

1. That § 56-245.1:4 of the Code of Virginia is amended and reenacted as follows:

§ 56-245.1:4. Notice procedures for nonpayment; disconnecting utility service.

A. Each utility subject to the provisions of As used in this section, "utility" has the same meaning as provided in § 56-245.1:3.

B. Each utility shall provide to each of its residential customers a copy of its disconnection for nonpayment policy (i) at any time a new residential account is established, (ii) when any disconnection for nonpayment of bills or fees is scheduled by including a copy of the policy with such notice, or (iii) by publishing the disconnection policy on the utility's website. Each such utility shall provide all required notices in notices required under this subsection in English and, Spanish, and, for customers residing in a locality that is required to provide voting or election materials in another language pursuant to § 24.2-128, in any such other language. Such required notices shall include information regarding payment plans and state, federal, or utility energy assistance programs.

~~B.~~ C. Each utility subject to the provisions of this section shall deliver notice of nonpayment of bills or fees to its residential customers prior to disconnection by using at least two of the following methods: (i) mail, (ii) email, (iii) text message, (iv) phone call, or (v) door hanger.

~~C. Utility disconnections~~ D. No utility shall disconnect a residential customer due to the nonpayment of bills or fees are prohibited for residential customers until the customer's account is 60 days in arrears and the utility has made reasonable efforts to offer bill payment assistance, arrange a payment plan, or provide information to the customer for other bill payment assistance or energy savings programs. After each missed payment, the utility shall provide notice pursuant to subsection ~~B~~ C and make contact with the customer and offer bill payment assistance, arrange a payment plan, or provide information to the customer for other bill payment assistance or energy savings programs.

~~D.~~ E. No electric or gas utility shall require a deposit of more than 25 percent of the arrearage amount for service, exclusive of nonpayment fees, penalties, or interest, in order to restore service to any residential customer where such utility received funding from the Department of Social Services for such customer through the Home Energy Assistance Program pursuant to § 63.2-805 within the last 12 months. A customer is eligible for this provision once every three years.

2. That no later than September 1, 2026, the Department of Elections shall post on its website a list of the localities designated as a covered locality pursuant to § 24.2-128 of the Code of Virginia and the minority languages in which each such locality is required to provide voting or election materials. The Department of Elections shall update such list as necessary to maintain accuracy.

HOUSE SUBSTITUTE

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