



Legislation Text

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Int. No. 372

By The Speaker (Council Member Adams) and Council Members Yeger, Louis, Nurse, Krishnan, Narcisse, Abreu, Restler, Ossé, De La Rosa, Dinowitz and Williams (by request of the Manhattan Borough President)

A Local Law to amend the New York city charter, in relation to the creation of an office of the utility advocate within the department of consumer and worker protection

Be it enacted by the Council as follows:

Section 1. Chapter 64 of the charter of the city of New York is amended by adding a new section 2204 to read as follows:

§ 2204. Office of the utility advocate. a. For the purposes of this section, the term “utility” means a provider of cable television, electric, gas, internet, steam, telephone or water service in the city.

b. The office of the utility advocate shall be established within the department. Such office shall:

1. Establish a website, email address and telephone number to receive communications from utility customers on their utility services;

2. Refer utility customers with complaints to the appropriate entity to handle such complaints, such as the utility, the public service commission, or the federal communications commission;

3. Advocate for utility customers by:

(a) Contacting utilities, the public service commission or any other entity with jurisdiction over utilities to resolve issues experienced by utility customers in the city; and

(b) Providing testimony for public hearings on the customer feedback received by the office.

Such public hearings shall include, but need not be limited to, rate cases conducted by the public service commission;

4. Assist consumers with accessing and navigating financial aid available to cover utility costs;

5. Conduct outreach and provide educational materials to the public on choosing, starting and stopping utility services; utility laws, rules and regulations, including their rights and protections with respect to utilities; financial aid available to help with utility payments; methods to lower the cost of their utility bills; and utility complaint procedures; and

6. Submit the annual report required by subdivision c of this section.

c. No later than October 31, 2023, and annually thereafter, the office shall submit to the mayor and the speaker of the council, and shall post conspicuously on the office's website, an annual report on the utility services provided from September 1 of the previous year to August 31 of the same year, that includes: (i) a summary of utility issues, with a rating of the performance of Consolidated Edison and a rating of the performance of National Grid that each take into account, at a minimum, such utility's service outages and storm preparedness; (ii) information on the communications received from customers about utilities; and (iii) recommendations for government action that would help ensure utilities better serve the public.

§ 2. This local law takes effect 120 days after it becomes law, except that the commissioner shall take such measures as are necessary for the implementation of this local law, before such date.

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