

7-512.1.

(a) (1) The Commission shall establish an electric universal service program to assist electric customers with annual incomes at or below [150%] 175% of the federal poverty level.

(2) The components of the electric universal service program shall include:

(i) bill assistance, at a minimum of 50% of the determined need;

(ii) low-income weatherization; and

(iii) the retirement of arrearages for electric customers who have not previously received assistance in retiring arrearages under the universal service program, not to exceed a total of \$1.5 million in any given fiscal year.

(3) The Department of Housing and Community Development is responsible for administering the low-income weatherization component of the electric universal service program.

(4) The Department of Human Resources, through the Office of Home Energy Programs, is responsible for administering the bill assistance and the arrearage retirement components of the electric universal service program.

(5) The Department of Human Resources may, with input from a panel or roundtable of interested parties, contract to assist in administering the bill assistance and the arrearage retirement components of the electric universal service program.

(6) The Commission has oversight responsibility for the bill assistance and the arrearage retirement components of the electric universal service program.

(7) In a specific case, the electric universal service program may waive the income eligibility limitation under paragraph (1) of this subsection in order to provide assistance to an electric customer who would qualify for a similar waiver under the Maryland Energy Assistance Program established under Article 41, § 6-406 of the Code.

(b) (1) All customers shall contribute to the funding of the electric universal service program through a charge collected by each electric company.

(2) The Commission shall determine a fair and equitable allocation for collecting the charges among all customer classes pursuant to subsection (e) of this section.

(3) In accordance with subsection (f)(6) of this section, any unexpended bill assistance and arrearage retirement funds returned to customers under subsection (f) of this section shall be returned to each customer class as a credit in the same proportion that the customer class contributed charges to the fund.

(4) An electric company shall recover electric universal service program costs in accordance with § 7-512 of this subtitle.