

2024 -- H 7429

LC003487

STATE OF RHODE ISLAND

IN GENERAL ASSEMBLY

JANUARY SESSION, A.D. 2024

A N A C T

RELATING TO PUBLIC UTILITIES AND CARRIERS -- PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION

Introduced By: Representatives Chippendale, Roberts, Quattrocchi, Rea, Newberry,
Nardone, Place, J. Brien, Fenton-Fung, and Vella-Wilkinson

Date Introduced: February 02, 2024

Referred To: House Corporations

It is enacted by the General Assembly as follows:

1 SECTION 1. Section 39-1-37.1 of the General Laws in Chapter 39-1 entitled "Public
2 Utilities Commission" is hereby amended to read as follows:

3 **39-1-37.1. Ratepayers advisory board.**

4 (a) There is hereby established the ratepayers advisory board. The advisory board shall
5 consist of the following public members:

6 (1) Four (4) members appointed by the speaker of the house of representatives, one of
7 whom shall represent the interests of residential ratepayers; one of whom shall represent the
8 interests of the elderly and disabled; one of whom shall represent a community-based consumer
9 organization representing low-income individuals; and one of whom shall represent a LIHEAP
10 consumer.

11 (2) Four (4) members appointed by the senate president, one of whom shall represent the
12 interests of residential ratepayers; one of whom shall represent a chamber of commerce; one of
13 whom shall represent a nonprofit energy consortium of businesses; and one of whom shall represent
14 a community action agency LIHEAP program provider.

15 (3) Three (3) members appointed by the governor, one of whom shall represent the
16 LIHEAP program administration; one of whom shall represent the interests of small business
17 owners; and one of whom shall ~~represent the interests of residents of affordable housing~~ be the
18 commissioner or the acting commissioner of the office of energy resources.

19 (b) The appointments to the advisory board shall be made as follows: each appointing

1 authority shall appoint one member to serve a term of one year, one member to serve a term of two
2 (2) years, and one member to serve a term of three (3) years. Thereafter, each member appointed
3 to the advisory board shall serve a three-year (3) term. The board members are eligible to succeed
4 themselves. A vacancy, other than by expiration of a term, shall be filled in the manner of the
5 original appointment, but only for the unexpired portion of the term.

6 (c) Five (5) members shall constitute a quorum. A majority vote of the board shall be
7 required for all recommendations, advice, and approvals of the board, in accordance with this
8 section.

9 (d) A board member shall not receive compensation for his or her service on the board but
10 may receive reimbursement for travel and other necessary expenses, while engaged in the
11 performance of official duties of the board.

12 (e) The ~~board shall elect annually a chairperson and vice chairperson from among its~~
13 ~~membership~~ chairperson of the board shall be the commissioner or acting commissioner of the
14 office of energy resources.

15 (f) The board shall receive staff and administrative support from the division, to organize
16 meetings and take and distribute minutes. The division shall also furnish the advisory board a
17 suitable location to hold its meetings.

18 (g) The board shall meet at least ~~quarterly~~ monthly and at the call of the chairperson or four
19 (4) board members. The administrator shall be present for all board meetings to inform the board
20 of the actions of the division and to respond to the board's inquiries.

21 (h) The board shall review legislative proposals and comment on existing state laws
22 relating to residential ratepayers.

23 (i) The board shall advise the administrator on matters concerning residential ratepayers
24 including, but not limited to utility shutoff policies, rate affordability, conservation measures,
25 consumer education, smart meters and/or restricted use meters, customer service charges,
26 legislation pending before the general assembly, and legislative initiatives.

27 (j) The advisory board shall issue an annual report of findings, including recommendations
28 on current or proposed state programs, policies, regulations, and laws, to the governor and the
29 general assembly.

30 (k) The board shall be subject to the provisions of chapter 2 of title 38, access to public
31 records act, and chapter 46 of title 42, open meetings act.

32 SECTION 2. This act shall take effect upon passage.

EXPLANATION
BY THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL
OF
A N A C T
RELATING TO PUBLIC UTILITIES AND CARRIERS -- PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION

1 This act would change the requirements of quarterly meetings of the board to monthly
2 meetings. The chairperson of the board would be the commissioner or acting commissioner of the
3 office of energy resources.

4 This act would take effect upon passage.

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