CITY OF SEATTLE

ORDINANCE _____

COUNCIL BILL 117762

AN ORDINANCE relating to the City Light Department; amending Seattle Municipal Code Chapter 21.49.040 to simplify the eligibility verification process for residential rate assistance.

WHEREAS, SMC 21.49.040 authorizes Seattle City Light to assist low income customers by offering lower electricity rates for customers meeting certain criteria; and

WHEREAS, the 2012 City Light Strategic Plan calls for improving utilization of the residential rate assistance program by qualified customers; and

WHEREAS, City Light has identified an opportunity to simplify the eligibility verification process for certain low income customers thereby making rate assistance more accessible to these individuals; and

WHEREAS, the City Council has reviewed the terms and conditions set forth within this Ordinance, has determined they are consistent with the financial policies supported by the Council, and believes they will continue to provide the users of electric service supplied by the City of Seattle efficient electric service at low cost; NOW, THEREFORE,

BE IT ORDAINED BY THE CITY OF SEATTLE AS FOLLOWS:

Section 1. Subsection 21.49.040, last amended by Ordinance 123988, is amended as follows:

SMC 21.49.040 Residential rate assistance (Schedules REC, RET, RES, REH, REB, RLC, RLT, RLS, RLH, and RLB).

* * *

B. Applicants for Schedules REC, RLC, RET, RLT, RES, RLS, REH, RLH, REB, and RLB shall verify the information required to certify their eligibility for residential rate assistance and shall provide such other data as is deemed appropriate upon forms and in the manner determined by Seattle City Light in conjunction with the City's Human Services Department.

Eligibility may also be verified by affordable housing groups that have contractual agreements with Seattle City Light to assist applicants with the enrollment process.

* * *

Section 2. This ordinance shall take effect and be in force 30 days after its approval by the Mayor, but if not approved and returned by the Mayor within ten days after presentation, it shall take effect as provided by Seattle Municipal Code Section 1.04.020.

Passed by the City Council the ____ day of _____, 2013, and signed by me in open session in authentication of its passage this _____ day of _____, 2013.

_____

President _____of the City Council

Approved by me this ____ day of _____, 2013.

_____

Michael McGinn, Mayor

Filed by me this ____ day of _____, 2013.

_____

Monica Martinez Simmons, City Clerk

(Seal)

Form revised: December 12, 2012

FISCAL NOTE FOR NON-CAPITAL PROJECTS

Department:	Contact Person/Phone:	CBO Analyst/Phone:
Seattle City Light	Paula Laschober 684-3168	Cameron Keyes 684-8048

Legislation Title:
AN ORDINANCE relating to the City Light Department; amending Seattle Municipal Code Chapter 21.49.040 to simplify the eligibility verification process for residential rate assistance.

Summary of the Legislation:
This ordinance amends SMC 21.49.040 to make rate assistance more accessible to qualified customers by allowing certain approved housing groups to assist customers in signing up for rate assistance.

Background:
City Light's 2012 Strategic Plan calls for increasing utilization of low income rate assistance. City Light offers rate assistance to qualifying low income customers. The threshold for qualifying for rate assistance varies by household size but, in general, a household is eligible if the household income is below 70 percent of the median state income and the residents do not live in subsidized housing. Customers in the rate assistance program pay approximately 40 percent of the standard residential rates.

Despite the generous rate assistance available, enrollment has been limited. One reason for this is that the burden of proof of eligibility is prohibitive for many potential customers who are in need of this assistance. This hurdle can be lowered by allowing certain approved affordable housing groups to assist eligible customers in signing up for rate assistance.

Enrolling existing customers in rate assistance programs will lead to lower revenues for the Department until new base rates are implemented (currently planned for 2015-2016). The size of this decreased revenue will depend on the number of new customers enrolled in the rate assistance program.

____ **This legislation does not have any financial implications.**

_X_ **This legislation has financial implications.**

Appropriations: N/A

Fund Name and Number	Department	Budget Control Level*	2013 Appropriation	2014 Anticipated Appropriation
TOTAL				

**See budget book to obtain the appropriate Budget Control Level for your department.*

Appropriations Notes:

Anticipated Revenue/Reimbursement Resulting from this Legislation:

Fund Name and Number	Department	Revenue Source	2013 Revenue	2014 Revenue
Light Fund (41000)	City Light	Retail Rates	- $650,000	- $650,000
TOTAL			- $650,000	- $650,000

Revenue/Reimbursement Notes:
Passing this ordinance will lead to a decrease in City Light's revenues as more customers sign up for residential rate assistance. The $650,000 is a rough estimate of the impact of enrolling 1000 new customers in rate assistance at an average annual benefit of $650 per customer. The actual impact will depend on the number of new customers enrolled, and these customers' individual usage. Overall, the impact is expected to be a small percentage of the overall retail revenue and will be monitored by City Light staff.

Total Regular Positions Created, Modified, or Abrogated through this Legislation, Including FTE Impact: N/A

Position Title and Department	Position # for Existing Positions	Fund Name & #	PT/FT	2013 Positions	2013 FTE	2014 Positions*	2014 FTE*
TOTAL							

** 2014 positions and FTE are total 2014 position changes resulting from this legislation, not incremental changes. Therefore, under 2014, please be sure to include any continuing positions from 2013.*

Position Notes:

Do positions sunset in the future?

Spending/Cash Flow: N/A

Fund Name & #	Department	Budget Control Level*	2013 Expenditures	2014 Anticipated Expenditures
TOTAL				

** See budget book to obtain the appropriate Budget Control Level for your department.*

Spending/Cash Flow Notes:

Other Implications:

a) **Does the legislation have indirect financial implications, or long-term implications?** Any reduction in City Light retail revenue will reduce payments to the General Fund via the 6% City Utility Tax. An annual reduction of $650,000 for City Light would result in an annual reduction of $39,000 in payments to the General Fund.

b) **What is the financial cost of not implementing the legislation?** If City Light does not make rate assistance more accessible, revenues from residential customers will not decrease as projected.

c) **Does this legislation affect any departments besides the originating department?** No.

d) **What are the possible alternatives to the legislation that could achieve the same or similar objectives?** None.

e) **Is a public hearing required for this legislation?** No.

f) **Is publication of notice with *The Daily Journal of Commerce* and/or *The Seattle Times* required for this legislation?** No.

g) **Does this legislation affect a piece of property?** No.

h) **Other Issues:** None.

List attachments to the fiscal note below: None.

City of Seattle
Office of the Mayor

April 2, 2013

Honorable Sally J. Clark
President
Seattle City Council
City Hall, 2nd Floor

Dear Council President Clark:

I am transmitting the attached proposed Council Bill that amends Seattle Municipal Code 21.49.040 in order to help more eligible customers benefit from residential rate assistance.

City Light's 2012 Strategic Plan calls for increasing utilization of low income rate assistance programs. This legislation changes the eligibility verification process to allow certain approved affordable housing groups to verify customers' eligibility on the Utility's behalf. Simplifying the application process will help enroll customers who were previously unaware of this benefit.

Seattle City Light is proud to offer a rate assistance program that is among the most comprehensive and generous in the country, and this legislation will extend its reach to even more residents. City Light estimates this amendment could provide one thousand customers with electric bill relief. Thank you for your consideration of this legislation. Should you have questions, please contact Paula Laschober, City Light Finance Director, at 206-684-3168.

Sincerely,

Michael McGinn
Mayor of Seattle

cc: Honorable Members of the Seattle City Council

Michael McGinn, Mayor
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