

Environmental

Advocates

NY

EANY SUPPORTS Keep Water On



Memo #5

[No Same As](#)
[S.1453 \(Parker, et al.\)](#)

Explanation:

This bill extends New York's moratorium on utility shut-offs, including water shut-offs, during the COVID-19 state of emergency. For New Yorkers who suffer financial harm due to the COVID-19 crisis, the bill also prohibits shut-offs for 180 days after the end of the state of emergency and guarantees customers the right to negotiate a deferred payment agreement without down payments, late fees, or penalties.

New York's current shut-off moratorium is set to expire on March 31, and this legislation would ensure current utility shut-off protections do not lapse for New Yorkers currently unable to pay their utility bills. All New Yorkers need clean, running water in their homes to stay healthy, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic. As the virus resurges and New York's economic situation remains dire, this legislation will guard against widespread shut-offs from sweeping the state.

Water shut-offs are a practice that many utilities employ when households cannot pay their water bills, and disproportionately harm low-income communities and communities of color. From 2015 through March 2019, the [City of Buffalo](#) terminated water in over 17,000 instances. In 2016, [Suffolk County Water Authority](#) disconnected water service for one percent of its customers, affecting 9,553 people.

To fully ensure that struggling families have access to the utility services, this bill could be made stronger by:

- Prohibiting the placement, sale, and enforcement of water liens during the emergency and recovery period;
- Requiring all community water systems and wastewater systems comply;
- Prohibiting the charging of interest and reconnection fees, selling of consumer debt to a collection agency, or reporting of consumer debt to a credit agency;
- Requiring consumer notification be sent with each utility bill to fully inform New Yorkers of their rights;
- Requiring immediate reconnection of customers still disconnected from service; and
- Ensuring that utilities cannot cancel ongoing deferred payment agreements when the bill's provisions expire.

Summary:

This bill amends the Public Service Law to extend the moratorium on utility shut-offs.