



# MEMORANDUM

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<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Information
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**DATE:** February 4, 2021

**TO:** Environmental Services Commission

**FROM:** Heather DeWitt, Utility Rate and Tax Relief Program Administrator

**SUBJECT:** Utility Rate Relief Programs and COVID-19 Response

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## **Action Required at this Time**

No action by the Commission is required. This is an informational briefing.

## **Fiscal Impact**

N/A

## **Policy Issues**

N/A

## **Background**

Bellevue has offered a Utility Rate Relief (URR) Program since 1980 to assist low-income seniors and persons with permanent disabilities. The URR Program provides a 70% discount or rebate on eligible customers' basic water, sewer, and storm drainage utility service charges. In 2019, the City implemented a new Emergency Assistance Program (EAP). The EAP provides temporary bill assistance to low-income households experiencing a financial shock, such as a job loss related to COVID-19. This program provides a 100% discount on basic water, sewer, and storm drainage utility service charges for up to four months of service. The EAP helps prevent service disconnection while customers recover from an event that interferes with a household's ability to cover basic needs.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the City adapted its processes to ensure customers could access the assistance they needed. Changes have been made to how customers apply for these programs and how program information is shared with the public since in-person appointments and outreach events are not possible.

On February 4, 2021, staff will brief the Commission on program participation, the challenges COVID-19 has introduced, and how the program has been adapted during COVID-19.