

its estimate does not include costs associated with a technical advisory committee, if the LITA Board should form one.

COMMENTS:

The CPUC regulates the rates and terms of service charged by the state's privately owned utilities that provide any of the following services: electrical, gas, telephone and water. To assist the CPUC, statute establishes the 11-member Low-Income Oversight Board to advise the CPUC on low-income electric, gas, and water customer issues and to serve as a liaison for the CPUC to low-income ratepayers and representatives. Notably, statute does not explicitly include issues faced by low-income telephone customers among the topics on which the Low-Income Advisory Board is to advise the CPUC.

State law directs the CPUC to establish and set rates for the California Lifeline Program, through which qualified low-income households may receive discounted home phone and cell phone services. The author introduced this measure to "strengthen" the California Lifeline Program

The CPUC asserts there is no need to create a separate advisory board specific to low-income telecommunications customers because the existing Low-Income Oversight Board already advises the CPUC on programs that help low-income Californians access affordable energy, water, and telecommunications services. The CPUC also maintains various administrative committees that function as advisory boards regarding the development, implementation and administration of their respective programs.

The author, while acknowledging the existence of the Low-Income Oversight Board, nonetheless asserts "telecommunications consumer-issues have been excluded from the scope of the Low-Income Oversight Board's purview" and that the LITA Board will provide "necessary oversight for telecommunications issues...improve systemic accountability, reduce fraud and administrative costs to the program, and seek to increase its participation rates among eligible individuals."

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