
OLR Bill Analysis

SB 336 (File 388, as amended by Senate "A")*

AN ACT CONCERNING THE METROPOLITAN DISTRICT OF HARTFORD COUNTY'S INDEPENDENT CONSUMER ADVOCATE.

SUMMARY

By law, the consumer counsel must appoint an independent consumer advocate to advocate for and represent Metropolitan District Commission (MDC) customers in matters that may affect them, (e.g., rates, water quality, water supply, and wastewater service quality) and MDC must pay the consumer advocate's costs. This bill increases, from \$50,000 to \$70,000, the maximum annual amount for these costs, unless the advocate demonstrates substantial need for additional funds and MDC's board approves them.

The bill expands who can qualify as the consumer advocate to include someone with legal experience in municipal, environmental, or public utility law and policy, rather than just someone with private legal experience in public utility law and policy. As under existing law, one must be a member of the Connecticut bar to qualify.

The bill also removes the requirement that the consumer counsel appoint the advocate by November in advance of the advocate's term, which under the bill starts January 1 in odd-numbered, rather than even-numbered, years. The bill gives the consumer counsel discretion to change the advocate's term length, start date, and expiration date if there is a vacancy or it is in MDC's consumers' best interests.

The bill also makes technical changes.

*Senate Amendment "A" (1) eliminates a provision requiring the consumer counsel, rather than MDC's board, to approve costs exceeding the annual maximum and (2) expands the type of legal experience someone can possess to qualify as the consumer advocate.

EFFECTIVE DATE: July 1, 2024

BACKGROUND

Consumer Counsel

The consumer counsel heads the Office of the Consumer Counsel, which advocates for consumer interests in matters that may affect Connecticut consumers with utility companies, electric suppliers, and certified telecommunications providers.

COMMITTEE ACTION

Planning and Development Committee

Joint Favorable

Yea 21 Nay 0 (03/22/2024)