

AMERICAN RESCUE PLAN UTILITY DEBT RELIEF PROGRAM SET TO EXPIRE ON JUNE 30, 2022

Eligible residential customers can receive up to \$8,000 toward their Past Due Utility Bills

VINELAND, NJ: The Vineland Municipal Utilities (VMU) wants to remind residential customers who have past due utility bill payments that the deadline to apply for financial assistance through the American Rescue Plan (ARP) Utility Debt Relief Program has been extended to June 30. The Program operates on a first come – first served basis until the funding runs out, so customers are encouraged to act quickly. The program is funded by the United States Department of Health and Human Services Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program through the American Rescue Plan. ARP Program “grant” payments are paid directly to your utility, with no required reimbursement.

“We strongly encourage residential customers who find themselves behind in their utility payments to find out if they qualify for this program,” said Vineland Municipal Utilities Director John Lillie. “It is a grant program, so you will be under no obligation to repay the funds. Customers can easily check if they are eligible by calling the ARP Call Center at 844-930-1778, Monday thru Saturday, from 8:00 am to 8:00 pm. You will need to provide your VMU account number and zip code.”

The New Jersey Division of Community Affairs (DCA) has also designated a local Program Contractor to assist residents of Cumberland County with the application process. Information is available in either English or Spanish via telephone or email by contacting the following:

Lightup Your World, Inc. – Contact Leke Adekitan

ladekitan@lightupyourworldinc.org

609-968-3362 (English)

856-206-8946 (Spanish)

info@lightupyourworldinc.org

The VMU is anxious to work with customers who are experiencing financial difficulty. Customers who have applied for utility assistance through the ARP Program will have their accounts placed in a protected service disconnection status until eligibility is determined by the DCA. If approved, accounts will remain in a protected status until payment is received from the ARP Program. However, customers are still responsible for balances after March 15, 2022, when the moratorium issued by Governor Murphy ended.

“VMU customers who do not apply for, or who are not eligible for the ARP Program, can sign up for a 12-month payment plan by contacting VMU Customer Service at 856-794-4021,” Lillie said. “Our mission is to provide customers with reliable, affordable, and uninterrupted utility services, but we need your help to do so.”

More information on other federal and state assistance programs is available at www.state.nj.us/bpu/assistance/programs/. You can also call 2-1-1, text your zip code to 898-211, or visit www.nj211.org. The Vineland Municipal Utilities also wants to remind customers to be mindful of scammers targeting utility customers during this time. The VMU would never call and demand payment over the phone, or by prepaid debit card under the threat of disconnecting services. All customer notices are delivered through the U.S. mail, and payments are only accepted by mail, in person at Vineland City Hall, or via our web portal with a credit or debit card.