

Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee

Joshua Schauer 271-3077

SB 597-FN, relative to utility rate increases to inflation-adjusted thresholds and performance incentive metrics for utilities.

Hearing Date: January 27, 2026

Members of the Committee Present: Senators Avard, McConkey, Watters and Rosenwald

Members of the Committee Absent : Senator McConkey

Bill Analysis: This bill prohibits the public utilities commission, pursuant to its rulemaking authority, from adopting an energy rate for any electric utility that exceeds the previous year's rate after adjusting for inflation. The bill also directs the public utilities commission to implement performance incentive metrics for utilities, including determining whether TOTEX ratemaking should be established.

Sponsors:

Sen. Perkins Kwoka

Sen. Rosenwald

Sen. Watters

Sen. Long

Sen. Prentiss

Sen. Altschiller

Sen. Fenton

Rep. McGhee

Rep. Wall

Rep. Cormen

Who supports the bill: Senator Perkins-Kwoka (SD21), Senator Cindy Rosenwald (SD13), Donald Kreis (Consumer Advocate), Art Cunningham, Jared Buckley, Corinne Gordon, Lisa Ayer, Suzanna Derynioski, Cara Cabral.

Who opposes the bill: Michael Licata (Eversource), Alec O'Meara, Daniel Richardson.

Who is neutral on the bill: Joshua Elliot (NH Department of Energy), Deana Dennis (CPCNH).

Summary of testimony presented in support:

Senator Rebecca Perkins Kwoka, District 21

- Senator Kwoka introduced the legislation as the prime sponsor and said she referred to bill as “the Lower Your Energy Prices Act”. She brought forward an amendment that addressed the concerns of the Public Utility Commission (PUC).

- She explained that the bill will stabilize utility costs for ratepayers and modernize public utilities. NH often ranks in the top 10 states with the highest costs for ratepayers. The average rate is 39% higher than the national average. Many of the ratepayers are seniors on fixed income or young people trying to get a footing in NH.
- In July the PUC approved a poles and wires charge increase from \$14 to \$19 per electric bill. She said that under SB597, if the rate increase per year is more than 4%, the Utility provider would be required to adopt a performance-based rate making structure. Under the traditional capital expenditure cost of service structure, only poles & wires, and other capital expenditures are authorized.
- This disincentives Utilities from updating and streamlining aging hardware. Alternative rate-making structures would help manage volatility, maintain & improve services, while taking advantage of all available resources. Bill aims to provide NH residents with more flexible, predictable, and modern utility services.

THIS BILL WAS RECESSED UNTIL FEBRUARY 10TH