



***For Immediate Release – January 2, 2024***

## **City of Florence to Implement Round Up “Coins that Add Relief and Enable” (CARE) Program Beginning May 1, 2024**

### **Media Contacts:**

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**FLORENCE, SC** – Effective **May 1, 2024**, all water and sewer service customers, inside and outside city limits, will be automatically enrolled in the “Coins that Add Relief and Enable” (CARE) program. The CARE Program will round up new and existing customer’s monthly bill to the nearest whole dollar. The most any one customer will pay annually is \$11.88. The funds will go into a separate account to help prevent water shut-offs for those who are unable to pay their bill. A small monthly contribution from customers can significantly impact community members in need of assistance. Customers may opt out of the program at any time starting today.

### **Applicant Assistance Requirements:**

- Applicants must be participants in the program; they cannot have opted out.
- Maximum assistance of up to \$150.00 is available once every six months.
- Applicants must reside at the address stated on the utility bill; however, when the bill is in the name of a household member other than the applicant, the applicant must provide proof s/he resides at that address, a relationship to the applicant (if applicable) and approval to access that account. Domestic partners living in the same household do not need approval to access the account.
- Applications will not be accepted if the person whose name appears on the bill has been deceased for longer than 12 months (except where the applicant is the spouse of the deceased), with proof required that the individual has been deceased less than 12 months; bill is in a minor’s name; or bill is in non-household adult’s name.
- When the bill is in the name of the landlord, the landlord must provide a statement indicating that the applicant is permitted to access that account, including making payment on the account. The file must include this documentation. The customer must provide a current Lease Agreement indicating the account is in the landlord’s name, but the bill is the responsibility of the tenant.
- May be used to pay service fees required for new service.

- Applicant must provide a copy or original utility (water) bill; the bill must have been issued within the last 30 days to verify the account number. Bill must detail all past due and current charges.
- Assistance funds cannot be used to pay bills that are in cut-off/disconnection status within five (5) days of the application date.
- Assistance funds may not be used to pay customer contributions that are voluntarily donated for round programs; those fees must be deducted from the customer's utility bill and excluded from the assistance fund amount.
- Assistance overage from a payment shall remain as a credit balance on the utility account until exhausted. No cash-out or refund benefits will be allowed for overage.

**Special Considerations Will be Given to the Following Vulnerable Households:**

- Residential accounts only
- Elderly-Individuals aged 60 years or older
- Disabled-Individuals with provided proof of disability
- Households with children aged 5 and younger
- Households with an income below the current income limit of 120% of the Area Median Income

**Application Process for CARE Assistance:**

Interested parties can complete the aid assistance application through a designated third-party agency. Each application will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis.

**Opting Out:**

The City has provided a simple online form which can be accessed by scanning the QR code or following the link:

<https://www.cognitofrms.com/CityOfFlorence/CAREProgramOptOut>

Alternatively, physical opt-out forms are available at the water billing department located in the City Center. Customers can start opting-out of the program now.



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