



To: Governor Rell
From: Kristen Formanek
Date: December 8, 2009
Re: Operation Fuel

I would like to begin by thanking Governor Rell and the Legislature for your continued support of energy assistance for Connecticut's most vulnerable citizens. I want to describe to you the experience of the Windsor Fuel Bank, which disburses grants for energy assistance both through Operation Fuel and through private funds and federal grants.

Ongoing support for Energy Assistance Programs, including Operation Fuel, is CRITICAL. Any reduction in funding to Operation Fuel will be devastating to Connecticut's vulnerable citizens and low-income households.

As an Operation Fuel fuel bank, I can speak first hand to desperate need for assistance past, present, and anticipated in the future. We are "on the front lines" and speak directly with individuals and families who, as a direct result of this current economic climate, are facing hardships that they have never faced before. Drove of people have come to us for assistance who say to us "I've always donated to you and now I need help".

Let me provide you with a brief overview of the past three fuel seasons which, I hope, will demonstrate for you the increased need that we see in Windsor. We have seen a 500% increase in

the dollar amount spent two years ago in the fuel season of 2005/2006 to that of 2007/2008. The season of 2006/2007 saw an increase of 120% from that of 2005/2006. The season of 2007/2008 saw an increase of 410% percent from 2006/2007.

The number of households assisted has increased dramatically. In the fuel season of 2005/2006 forty-four households were assisted by our fuel bank, in 2006/2007 fifty-five households were assisted, and in 2007/2008 one-hundred fifty-three households were assisted. Of those households, one-hundred and six were heated by funding from Operation Fuel, forty-seven by our private funds. We have seen a 300% increase in the number of households needing assistance to stay warm through the winter over the past three fuel seasons. This need for energy assistance could not have been met without the financial assistance of Operation Fuel.

The Windsor Fuel Bank continues to experience a high volume of applicants for energy assistance. Windsor residents are finding it difficult to meet their own heating needs. We are seeing low and middle-income families who are struggling and facing new challenges that they have not in previous years. People simply cannot afford the cost of heating their homes, buying food and medications, and paying the rest of their bills. The Windsor Fuel Bank is very concerned about being able to heat an increased number of homes, let alone the same volume as last season. To date, we have exhausted our private funds. The only avenue for people in need is state funding. In every year past Operation Fuel has been able to open it's program on December 1. This year they cannot open until January 4. People are literally waiting for help to keep themselves, their elders, and their children warm. What are we waiting for? Please act on behalf of all of your constituents and replenish the funding that was cut from Operation Fuel. We are incredibly worried about those households that are marginally over income guidelines and, left without assistance, will have to make difficult decisions

between heat, food, and medicine. In years past they would have been able to turn to Operation Fuel for help; will that be the case this year?

As I said in my opening remarks, ongoing support for fuel assistance is CRITICAL, now more than ever.

I thank you again for taking the time today to educate the public and raise awareness of this continuously growing need. I also thank you for allowing me to speak as the voice of the Windsor Fuel Bank.

Kristen Formanek, MSW

Town of Windsor

Social Services Coordinator

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