



Nonprofit Human Services Cabinet

Appropriations, Human Services and Energy & Technology Committees

Public Hearing

September 27, 2011

Re: LIHEAP Block Grant

Catholic Charities,
Archdiocese of Hartford

Children's League of
Connecticut

Connecticut AIDS
Resource Coalition

Connecticut Association
for Community Action

Connecticut Association
for Human Services

Connecticut Association
of Area Agencies on
Aging

Connecticut Association
of Nonprofits

Connecticut Coalition
Against Domestic
Violence

Connecticut Coalition to
End Homelessness

Connecticut Community
Providers Association

Connecticut Consortium
of Legal Services

Connecticut Council of
Family Service Agencies

Connecticut Sexual
Assault Crisis Services

Connecticut Women's
Consortium

End Hunger
Connecticut

Mental Health
Association of
Connecticut

Oak Hill

Planned Parenthood of
Southern New England

The Connection, Inc.

Wheeler Clinic

The Connecticut Nonprofit Human Services Cabinet is a statewide coalition comprised of 20 nonprofit human service associations and organizations representing approximately 800 providers. Its mission is to advance a strong and unified nonprofit human services system to effectively meet community needs. Members play a vital role in addressing the critical health and human services needs that face so many Connecticut residents – they provide the safety net that *anyone* can find themselves in need of when least expected.

We urge your thoughtful consideration of the LIHEAP Block Grant allocation plan developed by the Department of Social Services (DSS) and caution you not to leave Connecticut's low-income households in jeopardy of massive utility shut-offs in the spring without a clear plan for how to handle it.

The estimated FFY12 funding level for the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) Block Grant is \$46.4 million. This is a significant reduction over last year's allocation and a result of proposed reductions on the federal level – 50% reduction proposed by the President and a 25% reduction proposed by the Senate Appropriations Committee. This reduction will have devastating effects here in Connecticut.

The DSS block grant proposal will result in over 85,100 low income households losing their winter heating assistance. The proposal reduces the eligibility level for assistance by about half (from 60% of the state median income to 150% of the Federal Poverty Level) and does not include any benefit for utility heated households, such as those heated by electricity or natural gas. Instead, to meet the challenges of reduced federal funding, DSS plans to only provide heating assistance to those households heated by deliverable fuel, such as oil or propane.

While recognizing that no plan can be ideal when facing a reduction in federal funding of this magnitude, the current DSS plan presents a serious problem for households with electric or natural gas heat. Although Connecticut state law provides protections for utility heated households that prohibit electricity and natural gas suppliers from shutting off the utilities during the winter months because of non-payment, it doesn't change what the outcome will be in May.

We understand the severity of the problem that DSS is facing, but the current plan will result in massive utility shut-offs in the spring and the state needs to have a plan for how it will handle that situation. As policymakers and advocates continue advocating on the federal level for full funding of LIHEAP, we must also have a complete plan that not only deals with allocating reduced federal heating aid, but also the negative consequences of leaving out utility heated households that will occur down the road.

Again, we urge you to ensure that all of Connecticut's low-income households will be protected this winter and not forced to endure utility shut-offs in the spring.

For questions, please contact Liza Andrews, Project Director, at landrews@humanservicescabinet.org.

