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**TESTIMONY OF ENE (ENVIRONMENT NORTHEAST)
TO THE APPROPRIATIONS, HUMAN SERVICES
AND ENERGY AND TECHNOLOGY COMMITTEES**

**2011-2012 LOW INCOME HOME ENERGY ASSISTANCE PROGRAM BLOCK
GRANT ALLOCATION PLAN**

September 27, 2011

ENE (Environment Northeast) is a non-profit research and advocacy organization that focuses on energy, air quality and climate change solutions for New England and Eastern Canada. ENE has been active in Connecticut since 1998 and appreciates this opportunity to provide written testimony to the Appropriation, Human Services, and Energy and Technology Committees during the joint hearing on the 2011-2012 Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) Block Grant Allocation Plan.

ENE recognizes the difficult situation and choices Connecticut's leaders and low income residents face with decreasing federal aid and increasing fuel prices. As winter approaches, our most vulnerable residents need urgent financial assistance to help pay at least a portion of their heating bills and so we appreciate your efforts in determining the appropriate allocation of LIHEAP dollars.

However, we also wish to make a broader point. Any fuel assistance program can only help residents get through one winter—and this year, low income residents must contend with potential lowered income eligibility and fuel-specific aid. While Connecticut and its residents are in the midst of tough economic times, responding to this crisis in any economy by trying to provide some needed fuel bill relief is, realistically, a temporary and incomplete fix. Without a comprehensive approach to addressing heating costs, both residents and the State will be in the exact same situation year after year.

ENE makes no recommendation at this time on the propriety of shifting income eligibility levels or of selecting aid recipients based on heating fuel. ENE, however, believes that this difficult choice highlights the need to supplement fuel cost assistance with a more sustainable solution that provides Connecticut's residents with sustained benefits by allowing greater access to energy efficiency programs. These programs make our homes and buildings more efficient, lower energy consumption permanently, and, in doing so, also reduce energy bills. The most effective response to this crisis is to help consumers use energy more efficiently.

Connecticut's Home Energy Solutions-Income Eligible program served 15,347 customers in 2010, saving those customers \$6.1 million per year for a calculated lifetime savings of \$70.4 million. Eligible participants received weatherization and other services at no cost. This program partners the Connecticut Energy Efficiency Fund and the Department of Social Services, among

other social service agencies and community groups throughout the State. Other residents and businesses that may not qualify for income eligibility can still access similar programs at low cost.

However, each year, the Energy Efficiency Fund faces funding shortages, occasional "fund raids" (the latest of which was successfully averted, with the leadership of many of these Committees' members), and funding limitations based on fuel type, creating a shortage of program and service availability to residents and businesses that could benefit from permanently lowered energy bills. ENE, which is a member of the Energy Efficiency Board, respectfully encourages these Committees to support expanded efficiency investments for all fuels this year and in the future. While LIHEAP and other financial aid will continue to be necessary for many families, Connecticut must find longer term, sustainable weatherization and efficiency solutions to help with the burden of high heating bills every winter.

Because Connecticut has no indigenous fossil fuel resources, investments in energy efficiency keep Connecticut's energy dollars from leaving the State to pay for out-of-state fossil fuels. Energy efficiency keeps energy dollars in residents' pockets in the form of lowered consumption and lowered bills, keeping more dollars in-state, supporting a healthier and more robust local economy. It is our hope that your Committees, Governor Malloy, DEEP Commissioner Esty, and other leadership within the State will seize the opportunity to support greater and more sustainable measures to help our residents and businesses make their energy costs more affordable every winter, every season, and every year.

Thank you,

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