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**Written Testimony in Support of the LIHEAP Funding  
and Energy Assistance**

**Appropriations, Energy & Technology, and Human Services  
Committees Public Hearing, September 27, 2011**

Senator Harp, Representative Walker, Senator Fonfara, Representative Nardello, Senator Musto, Representative Tercyak and members of the Appropriations, Energy and Human Services Committees,

My name is Gary Smith. I am married with two children and live in East Hampton. I am 56 years old and was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis on February 13, 2001.

A year after my diagnosis I was unable to continue working. Ever since then I have lived on a fixed income from Social Security Disability Insurance. I am deeply grateful to the state of Connecticut for helping to cover some of my heating expenses over the past few winters.

I would like to share with you some of the difficulties I have experienced as a result of MS. In 2001, following my diagnosis with multiple sclerosis, I became unemployed. Without an income it quickly became apparent that I could not afford my medical bills. I began having to charge all of my medications to my credit cards and found myself in an immensely deep financial hole. I was forced to declare bankruptcy.

Having multiple sclerosis can make it difficult to afford the most basic human necessities, even paying for things such as heat can be nearly impossible.

The \$580 that I received this year in energy assistance has been helpful, but it is merely a drop in the bucket towards my energy bills. Two years ago I was approximately \$2,000 behind on my Connecticut Light and Power bill.

Thankfully, I was accepted into their NU Start Program, which allows me to gradually pay off my bills without losing electricity and heat. Nonetheless, I often find myself having to decide between paying my medical bills and paying my household bills.

Just recently I was left with no option but to discontinue my use of Provigil, a drug that had been immensely helpful in the treatment of my MS fatigue, in favor of a cheaper and likely less effective alternative.

I am urging the Appropriations, Energy and Technology and Human Services Committees to use the Low Income Energy Advisory Board's recommendations to approve making the following changes to the plan:

- Maintain the FFY 11 LIHEAP program structure and program eligibility levels and plan for reduced benefits by creating a three-tiered approach to allow the program to modify benefit levels based on federal and potential state-appropriated funds.
- Modify the start date for CEAP fuel authorizations from November 15 to November 1
- Commit state-appropriated funds to supplement federal funds allocated for administrative costs to the Community Action agencies and other qualified entities to administer the program.
- Commit state-appropriated funds to supplement federal funds for the overall operation of CEAP (CT Energy Assistance Program).

Please make changes to insure last year's levels of energy assistance will be available this winter.

Thank you for your continued support.

Gary Smith