



Operation Fuel, Inc.

WE'RE ALL PART OF THE OPERATION.

Patricia J Wrice
Executive Director

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Good evening Senator Harp and Representative Walker and other members of the Appropriations Committee. My name is Patricia Wrice; I am executive director of Operation Fuel. I want to thank Governor Malloy and you for preserving the funding of \$1.1million for Operation Fuel. Operation Fuel is a private statewide non-profit organization that provides emergency energy assistance. Through a network of 105 fuel banks statewide, Operation Fuel provides emergency energy assistance to the elderly, disabled individuals, and working poor families who are facing a financial crisis and are not eligible for, or have exhausted, government energy assistance benefits.

Since 1977, Operation Fuel has distributed more than \$30 million in energy assistance, helping over 100,000 families stay warm during the winter and keep their lights on year round. Unlike government energy assistance, which only pays for heat, Operation Fuel is energy blind - we will pay for any source of energy, including energy used to cook or to heat, cool, or light a home.

We are requesting an increase in appropriations for Energy Assistance to Operation Fuel by an additional \$2.2 million. Under the Federal LIHEAP (Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program) funding, Connecticut has \$32.5 million less to spend this heating season compared with last year. This is the first program households turn to for energy assistance. When those funds run out, households turn to Operation Fuel for help.

With an additional \$2 million, Operation Fuel will run a program that will provide 4,000 households with up to \$500 per household and expand eligibility from 200% of poverty to accommodate households up to 60% of State median income.

Operation Fuel will set aside \$20 per energy grant to support the costs for the fuel banks to pay for counseling to the families and individuals who come for fuel assistance, determine their eligibility for funds, work out payment arrangements with utilities, enroll clients into matching payment plans run by the utility companies, pay for copying and provide fuel assistance. The remainder of the funding would be used by Operation Fuel to support the administration and documentation of a household's eligibility to receive an emergency grant. The funds to support the administration of the program will come from unclaimed utility deposits. Operation Fuel has extremely low overhead costs; 85% or more of every dollar we distribute goes directly to supporting the distribution of emergency energy assistance. Thank you so much for your consideration.