Low Income Energy Advisory Board

TESTIMONY PRESENTED TO THE APPROPRIATIONS, ENERGY AND TECHNOLOGY, AND HUMAN SERVICES COMMITTEES

October 1, 2012

Anne Foley, Chair

Low Income Energy Advisory Board

Testimony Supporting Governor Malloy's FFY 13 Block Grant Allocation Plan for the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program

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Good afternoon Senators Harp, Musto, and Fonfara, Representatives Walker, Tercyak, and Nardello and distinguished members of the Appropriations, Human Services, and Energy and Technology Committees. Thank you for the opportunity to offer written testimony on behalf of the Low Income Energy Advisory Board (LIEAB) regarding Governor Malloy's federal fiscal year (FFY) 2013 allocation plan for the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP).

As you may know, the Low Income Energy Advisory Board was created in 2005 to advise and assist the executive branch in the planning, development, implementation and coordination of energy-assistance-related programs and policies and to make recommendations to the General Assembly regarding legislation, plans, and administration of LIHEAP to ensure affordable access to residential energy services to low-income state residents.

Consistent with our statutory mandate, I am pleased to inform you that the Low Income Energy Advisory Board voted unanimously at our meeting on August 13 to

approve Governor Malloy's FFY 2013 allocation plan for LIHEAP without modification.

The allocation plan before you addresses the heating needs of Connecticut's low income households by restoring the traditional benefit structure used in previous years. A basic benefit will be provided to eligible households, regardless of heating source, and additional Crisis Assistance and Safety Net Assistance benefits will be available to eligible deliverable fuel-heated households. Given last year's record warm temperatures, this plan assumes the FFY 11 caseload numbers, which provide a more accurate estimate of the need than last year's caseload. Like many of the policy decisions reflected in this plan, this provision is consistent with a LIEAB recommendation.

We are pleased that the Governor's FFY 2013 LIHEAP allocation plan includes most of the provisions we recommended to him in June for inclusion in this year's plan. In particular, the plan:

- Maintains the income eligibility limit for CEAP benefits at 60% of the State Median Income.

- Maintains the existing asset limits for eligibility.

- Restores basic benefits within the meaning of C.G.S. Section 16a-41a and provides equitable energy assistance benefits regardless of heat source.

- In establishing benefit levels for each income category, moves to a structure that generally follows the relative benefit levels by income for LIHEAP plans prior to the FFY12 allocation plan.

- Treats households with a child under six years old as "vulnerable" in all income categories that differentiate benefits bases on the presence of a vulnerable household member.

- Provides a meaningful (not nominal) benefit to households with heat included in the rental payment.

On behalf of the Low Income Energy Advisory Board, thank you for the opportunity to submit written testimony in support of Governor Malloy's FFY13 allocation plan for the federal Low Income Home Energy Assis