

Informational Forum On Energy

Appropriations Committee, Human Services Committee and Energy and Technology Committee, Friday, March 23, 2012, Room LOB 2-A

Testimony of: Edward Sanady, Energy Assistance Coordinator, West Hartford Social Services (860-561-7565)

- Good afternoon. My name is Edward Sanady and I am speaking to you today as a representative of the Town of West Hartford, where I have worked in the Social Services division for the past twenty-five years. My job entails coordination of a variety of programs and services benefiting low and moderate income households. Among the several different hats I wear is one that makes me West Hartford's official Energy Assistance Coordinator.
- I wish to speak with you today in regard to the 2011 to 2012 Connecticut Energy Assistance Program. More specifically, I want to express my regret and my concern over the way in which the benefit levels established for this year's program has created a two-tier system; a system that rewards low-income households simply because their homes have a heat plant powered by a deliverable fuel and is conversely punitive to low-income households who happen to heat with natural gas or electricity or whose heating expenses are included as part of their rent payments.
- Yesterday I sat and did a dollar for dollar analysis of this year's program and focused on some of the differences in the established benefit levels. The results are as follows: For those who heat with a deliverable fuel; propane or fuel oil - the maximum benefit for a vulnerable household is \$1,985 and for a non-vulnerable household the maximum benefit is \$1,495.
- For those who heat with electricity or natural gas – the maximum benefit for a vulnerable household is \$395 and for a non-vulnerable household the maximum benefit is \$360. Utility - heated households, once approved for CEAP have their benefits matched by CL&P or by CNG. This doubling effect increases the maximum benefit for a vulnerable household to \$790 and a non-vulnerable household to \$720.
- More simply put – a vulnerable, deliverable-fuel household receives \$1,195 more than their counterparts who heat with electricity or with natural gas. For non-vulnerable households the benefit is \$775 greater for deliverable fuel households when compared to utility heated households.
- When comparing this year's benefits to last year's – a vulnerable, deliverable-fuel household saw a \$95 decrease while the decrease for a deliverable fuel, non-vulnerable household was \$145.
- For a vulnerable, utility heated household the decrease is \$485; or \$970 when doubled by a utility company matching payment and for a non vulnerable utility heated household the decrease from last year is \$480; or \$960 when doubled by a matching payment from the utility company. For each utility heated household that is an average benefit decrease of nearly \$1,000 when compared to \$95 and \$140 for each deliverable fuel heated household.

- The likely impact of this discrepancy, which will not be seen for another few weeks, at the conclusion of the winter moratorium, will be catastrophic for many of our state's lowest income households. We will see more service terminations than ever before. For many the problem will be insurmountable. This is a sad fact when, for many this would have been avoided by a more equal distribution of the negative impact caused by this year's reduction to Connecticut's LIHEAP funding.
- There is also one other issue in this year's program which bears mention during this forum. It involves households who have their heat included as part of their rent. The maximum benefit in the 2010 to 2011 program was \$440.00. This year the benefit is locked in at \$10, \$15 or \$20. For this type of applicant the amount is hardly worth going through the application process. In fact, most have chosen to pass on the opportunity.
- In conclusion, I know that for this year it is too late to correct the problems I have outlined. My request today is that you take whatever steps are necessary to be certain that the same mistakes are not repeated this coming fall when Connecticut's Energy Plan is being finalized.
- If you have any questions for me I'd be happy to answer them. In the meantime, I want to thank each of you for taking the time to listen to me this afternoon.