



**August 25, 2014 Public Hearing Testimony before the  
Connecticut General Assembly  
Appropriations, Human Services, and Energy & Technology Committees**

**LOW INCOME HOME ENERGY ASSISTANCE PROGRAM (LIHEAP)  
BLOCK GRANT ALLOCATION PLAN FFY 2014/2015**

Distinguished Chairpersons, Vice-Chairpersons, Ranking Members, and Members of the Appropriations, Human Services, and Energy & Technology Committees:

Thank you for holding this hearing on the proposed Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) Block Grant Allocation Plan for FFY 2014/2015. My name is Amos Smith and I am the President/CEO of the Community Action Agency of New Haven (CAANH) and a Board Vice Chair of the Connecticut Association for Community Action (CAFCA). As you know, CAFCA is the state association for Connecticut's ten (10) Community Action Agencies (CAAs), the state and federal designated anti-poverty agencies. Our network serves every one of Connecticut's 169 cities and towns.

Every year, the Connecticut Energy Assistance Program (CEAP) continues to help thousands of Connecticut families pay their heating bills and avoid energy crises. On behalf of Connecticut's Community Action network, I would like to thank you and Governor Malloy for strongly advocating for this critical program and Commissioner Bremby for his ongoing support and that of his staff at the Department of Social Services.

As we begin to prepare for the winter months ahead, our statewide network of CAAs face an ever-growing need for energy assistance in communities across Connecticut. In 2013, our network reported that over 105,000 households avoided crises with energy assistance. In addition, we processed over 116,000 CEAP applications (FY 2013/2014 data is available on page 3), an increase from the 2012-2013 caseload. Moreover, the financial burden low-income families face each winter season as they struggle to pay their heating bills is extremely high. According to the Home Energy Affordability Gap: Connecticut (2013) Report, Connecticut's poorest families owe approximately \$2,363 more in energy bills than they can afford to pay.

In a recent report by the National Center for Children in Poverty, more than half of families affected by economic Energy Insecurity (EI)—defined as an inability to adequately meet basic household heating, cooling, and energy needs—are living in poverty, and about one third are extremely poor<sup>1</sup>. These energy deficiencies diminish a family's ability to keep up with other costs associated with basic needs, forcing them to modify their budget. Certain household

<sup>1</sup> National Center for Children in Poverty. "Energy Insecurity Among Families with Children" (January 2014). Available at: [http://www.nccp.org/publications/pdf/text\\_1086.pdf](http://www.nccp.org/publications/pdf/text_1086.pdf)

costs cannot be avoided; for example, if rent is not paid, eviction is inevitable. Child care and car bills must be paid, or parents face the possibility of losing their jobs. And so, especially throughout the winter months, many low-income families in energy crises make cuts to the food budget in order to pay their heating bills. This dilemma is known to doctors and researchers as “heat or eat<sup>2</sup>.” Forced to choose between these two essential necessities, many low-income families go without one or the other. This tradeoff poses a real challenge and significant threat for low-income families, especially those with children.

LIHEAP helps low-income families to not only cover their high home heating bills and keep warm during the frigid winter months, but also gives them the opportunity to address and offset the cost of these other critical, basic needs, resulting in a positive impact on their overall health. The program provides the essential support these families need and help to ensure they never have to choose between heating their home and putting food on the table, or endangering their family with hazardous methods of heating their home such as space heaters or other appliances.

Dr. Deborah Frank, M.D., a renowned professor and pediatrician with the Boston University School of Medicine and the Boston Medical Center, has testified to Congress that:

‘LIHEAP is a child survival program. LIHEAP is a child health program. LIHEAP is a nutrition program, and LIHEAP is a child development program.’ She further notes that in medical school it is drummed into a pediatric intern’s head that a child will freeze before he/she starves.

So it is obvious, the need for the LIHEAP program in our communities has never been clearer, especially with the brutal winter season our state endured last year. More families are coming to our doors to ask for help, and our agencies expect yet another increase in the number of eligible customers for the upcoming year. Therefore, we would like to commend Commissioner Bremby and DSS for basing its CEAP allocation on level funding from FFY 2014. In addition to the state’s support of the program, we remain grateful that Connecticut has decided to continue its policy of allocating additional assistance to low-income families so that they can remain eligible for food assistance. Although we remain uncertain about a final funding allocation for the LIHEAP program and are dealing with a decrease in overall LIHEAP funds due to a lesser amount of carryover funds, we appreciate the department’s ongoing efforts to ensure the program is funded in the best way possible. And so, we are pleased to be here to support the Department’s CEAP 2014/2015 Allocation Plan for the LIHEAP Block Grant.

Energy assistance is critical in helping to keep struggling families safe and housed, and we would like to recognize and praise Connecticut’s federal delegation for continuing to fight for appropriate funding levels for the LIHEAP Block Grant. We remain hopeful that LIHEAP funding will be maintained at least at the current level, since no funding level for FFY14 has yet been decided.

Thank you very much in advance for your time and consideration. I am happy to take any questions you may have.

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<sup>2</sup> Food and Research Action Center (FRAC). “Heat and Eat” (March 2009). Available at: [http://frac.org/newsite/wp-content/uploads/2009/09/heat\\_and\\_eat09.pdf](http://frac.org/newsite/wp-content/uploads/2009/09/heat_and_eat09.pdf)

**Chart 1: CEAP/CHAP Total Caseload Comparison**

<b>Agency</b>	<b><u>2013/2014</u> <u>(6/26/2014)</u></b>	<b><u>2012/2013</u> <u>(Final)</u></b>
ABCD (Bridgeport)	11,465	10,925
BCO (Bristol)	3,360	3,436
CAAWC (Danbury)	5,104	4,762
CRT (Hartford/Middletown)	29,584	29,028
TEAM (Derby)	4,434	4,080
HRAofNB (New Britain)	4,286	4,262
CAAofNH (New Haven)	12,209	12,412
NEON (Norwalk)	5,014	5,214
TVCCA (Norwich)	9,527	9,470
NO (Waterbury/Meriden)	23,370	23,171
ACCESS (Willimantic)	8,217	8,105
<b>Statewide Totals:</b>	<b>116,570</b>	<b>114,865</b>

Data from DSS

**Chart 2: CEAP/CHAP Eligible Caseload Comparison**

<b>Agency</b>	<b><u>2013/2014</u> <u>(6/26/2014)</u></b>	<b><u>2012/2013</u> <u>(Final)</u></b>
ABCD (Bridgeport)	10,356	9,855
BCO (Bristol)	2,846	2,806
CACD (Danbury)	4,420	4,088
CRT (Hartford/Middletown)	25,677	25,141
TEAM (Derby)	3,544	3,520
HRAofNB (New Britain)	3,502	3,394
CAAofNH (New Haven)	10,579	10,458
NEON (Norwalk)	4,410	4,447
TVCCA (Norwich)	8,359	8,321
NO (Waterbury/Meriden)	21,407	21,198
ACCESS (Willimantic)	7,581	7,474
<b>Statewide Totals:</b>	<b>102,681</b>	<b>100,702</b>

Data from DSS