

Testimony in Support of the Proposed FFY18 LIHEAP Allocation Plan

August 31, 2017

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Chairperson, Low Income Energy Advisory Board

***ON BEHALF OF THE LOW INCOME ENERGY ADVISORY BOARD***

Thank you to the Appropriations, Human Services and Energy and Technology Committees for the opportunity for the Low Income Energy Advisory Board (LIEAB) to offer support for the FFY 2017/2018 Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) Block Grant Allocation Plan. LIEAB, which advises the planning, development, implementation and coordination of energy-assistance-related programs and policies and low-income weatherization assistance programs and policies, has had input into the development of the LIEAP Plan and voted to support it at our 8/2/17 meeting.

As you know, the Plan assumes that the block grant amount is reduced by 5% over FFY 2016/2017 amounts due to sequestration, but also includes LIHEAP carry forward funds and LIHEAP vendor refunds, for a total of \$82,176,828.00. All benefits are increased and caseloads are projected to increase. Here are some of the key highlights of the plan, as laid out by DSS:

- Safety Net Benefits, up \$40 from current levels, at \$455 per authorization, remain the same as last year's levels, which means up to two authorizations for Non-Vulnerable deliverable fuel heated households receiving a Level 1 - Level 4 benefit, and up to three for Vulnerable households at Level 1 - Level 4. Households receiving a Level 5 Basic Benefit are not eligible for Safety Net benefits.
  - o Vulnerable households are those in which one or more members is either elderly (60 years of age or older), under age six or disabled.
- Crisis Assistant Benefits are available for Level 1 - 5 households.
- \$1 million is again available to provide repairs or replacement of heating systems for single family, owner occupied dwellings that are determined to be unsafe or inoperable. Vendors performing the work will be selected competitively. These funds will be available to eligible homeowners receiving a Level 1 - Level 5 Basic Benefit, with a priority for vulnerable households. Currently these funds are available only through the Level 4 Basic Benefit.

- The funding designated for heating system repair/replacement will also be used to cover costs of cleaning, tuning and testing heating systems. This service is available to homeowners and renters, given they have landlord permission.
  - o Community Action Agencies shall not issue an authorization for a fuel delivery in cases where heating systems, including leaking fuel tanks, have been 'red tagged' by a vendor certified to evaluate heating systems.
- Rental Assistance Benefits continue to be available to Level 1 through 5 households and are up \$25 in each category. This provides direct cash assistance to rental households that do not make direct-to-vendor payment for primary heat/have heat included in rent, have income up to 60 percent of the state median income and pay more than 30 percent of their income towards rent.
- A LIHEAP SNAP benefit of \$20.01 will continue to be issued to households that do not make direct-to-vendor payments for their heat, have a shelter and/or utility obligation and pay thirty percent or less of their gross income toward rent.

LIEAB looks forward to this proposed plan being approved by the Committees of cognizance and working with you in the future.

Thank you.