



**Substitute Senate Bill No. 438**

**Public Act No. 18-88**

**AN ACT REQUIRING TIMELY PAYMENT OF FUEL VENDORS IN THE CONNECTICUT ENERGY ASSISTANCE PROGRAM.**

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives in General Assembly convened:

Section 1. Section 16a-41a of the general statutes is repealed and the following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective from passage*):

(a) The Commissioner of Social Services shall submit to the joint standing committees of the General Assembly having cognizance of energy planning and activities, appropriations, and human services the following on the implementation of the block grant program authorized under the Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Act of 1981, as amended:

(1) Not later than August first, annually, a Connecticut energy assistance program annual plan which establishes guidelines for the use of funds authorized under the Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Act of 1981, as amended, and includes the following:

(A) Criteria for determining which households are to receive emergency and weatherization assistance;

(B) A description of systems used to ensure referrals to other energy assistance programs and the taking of simultaneous applications, as

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required under section 16a-41;

(C) A description of outreach efforts;

(D) Estimates of the total number of households eligible for assistance under the program and the number of households in which one or more elderly or physically disabled individuals eligible for assistance reside; [and]

(E) Design of a basic grant for eligible households that does not discriminate against such households based on the type of energy used for heating; and

(F) A payment plan for fuel deliveries beginning November 1, 2018, that ensures a vendor of deliverable fuel who completes deliveries authorized by a community action agency that contracts with the commissioner to administer a fuel assistance program is paid by the community action agency not later than thirty business days after the date the community action agency receives an authorized fuel slip or invoice for payment from the vendor;

(2) Not later than January thirtieth, annually, a report covering the preceding months of the program year, including:

(A) In each community action agency geographic area and Department of Social Services region, the number of fuel assistance applications filed, approved and denied, the number of emergency assistance requests made, approved and denied and the number of households provided weatherization assistance;

(B) In each such area and district, the total amount of fuel, emergency and weatherization assistance, itemized by such type of assistance, and total expenditures to date; [and]

(C) For each state-wide office of each state agency administering the

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program, each community action agency and each Department of Social Services region, administrative expenses under the program, by line item, and an estimate of outreach expenditures; and

(D) A list of community action agencies that failed to make timely payments to vendors of deliverable fuel in the Connecticut energy assistance program and the steps taken by the commissioner to ensure future timely payments by such agencies; and

(3) Not later than November first, annually, a report covering the preceding twelve calendar months, including:

(A) In each community action agency geographic area and Department of Social Services region, (i) seasonal totals for the categories of data submitted under subdivision (1) of this subsection, (ii) the number of households receiving fuel assistance in which elderly or physically disabled individuals reside, and (iii) the average combined benefit level of fuel, emergency and renter assistance;

(B) Types of weatherization assistance provided;

(C) Percentage of weatherization assistance provided to tenants;

(D) The number of homeowners and tenants whose heat or total energy costs are not included in their rent receiving fuel and emergency assistance under the program by benefit level;

(E) The number of homeowners and tenants whose heat is included in their rent and who are receiving assistance, by benefit level; and

(F) The number of households receiving assistance, by energy type and total expenditures for each energy type.

(b) The Commissioner of Social Services shall implement a program to purchase deliverable fuel for low-income households participating in the Connecticut energy assistance program and the state-

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appropriated fuel assistance program. The commissioner shall ensure that no fuel vendor discriminates against fuel assistance program recipients who are under the vendor's standard payment, delivery, service or other similar plans. The commissioner may take advantage of programs offered by fuel vendors that reduce the cost of the fuel purchased, including, but not limited to, fixed price, capped price, prepurchase or summer-fill programs that reduce program cost and that make the maximum use of program revenues. As funding allows, the commissioner shall ensure that all agencies administering the fuel assistance program shall make payments to program fuel vendors in advance of the delivery of energy where vendor provided price-management strategies require payments in advance.

(c) Each community action agency administering a fuel assistance program shall submit reports, as requested by the Commissioner of Social Services, concerning pricing information from vendors of deliverable fuel participating in the program. Such information shall include, but not be limited to, the state-wide or regional retail price per unit of deliverable fuel, the reduced price per unit paid by the state for the deliverable fuel in utilizing price management strategies offered by program vendors for all consumers, the number of units delivered to the state under the program and the total savings under the program due to the purchase of deliverable fuel utilizing price-management strategies offered by program vendors for all consumers.

(d) If funding allows, the Commissioner of Social Services, in consultation with the Secretary of the Office of Policy and Management, shall require that, each community action agency administering a fuel assistance program begin accepting applications for the program not later than September first of each year.

(e) Not later than November 1, 2018, the Commissioner of Social Services shall require each community action agency administering a fuel assistance program to make payment to a vendor of deliverable

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fuel not later than thirty days after the community action agency receives an authorized fuel slip or invoice for payment from the vendor.

[(e)] (f) The Commissioner of Social Services shall submit each plan or report described in subsection (a) of this section to the Low-Income Energy Advisory Board, established pursuant to section 16a-41b, not later than seven days prior to submitting such plan or report to the joint standing committee of the General Assembly having cognizance of matters relating to energy and technology, appropriations and human services.

Approved June 4, 2018