



**August 26, 2019 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 2020**

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 2020. My name is Deb Polun and I am the new Executive Director of the Connecticut Association for Community Action (CAFCA). CAFCA is the state association that works with Connecticut's Community Action Agencies (CAAs), the state and federal designated anti-poverty agencies serving over 250,000 limited income people in all 169 cities and towns across Connecticut.

Each year, the Connecticut Energy Assistance Program (CEAP) continues to help over 81,000 families in the state who come to our doors looking for assistance with their heating bills to avoid unnecessary energy crises. The Community Action Agencies are proud partners with the Department of Social Services (DSS) and with other local agencies in the effort to raise awareness of CEAP, and to enroll people into this important program.

Connecticut residents pay the highest energy costs in the nation,¹ and Connecticut households with incomes of below 50% of the Federal Poverty Level pay 38% of their annual income simply for their home energy bills². This is what our poorest families are up against during the bitter cold winter months.

These high costs put families in crisis mode and threaten their ability to pay for other essential basic needs. This forces them to choose between heating their homes and other necessary costs like food, child care, health care, and housing.

Energy insecurity—when a household lacks consistent access to enough of the kinds of energy needed for health and safety—can lead to poor health outcomes for children³. Dr. Deborah Frank, M.D., distinguished professor and pediatrician with the Boston University School of

¹ McCann, Adam, "2019 Most & Least Energy-Expensive States", *WalletHub*, July 3, 2019, <https://wallethub.com/edu/energy-costs-by-state/4833/>

² Colton, Fisher, Sheehan (2019). *Connecticut 2018 Home Energy Affordability Gap State Face Sheet*. (2018). Available from: http://www.homeenergyaffordabilitygap.com/03a_affordabilityData.html

³ Bailey, Kathryn, et al. (2011). *LIHEAP Stabilizes Family Housing and Protects Children's Health* (Policy action brief). Available from: http://neada.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/02/childrens_healthenergy_brief_feb11.pdf

Medicine and the Boston Medicine Center, testified before Congress⁴ that when certain household costs cannot be avoided and their heating bill is due, many poor families facing energy crises dip into the only flexible part of their budget to bridge the gap: their food budget. She notes that families and doctors know children will freeze to death before they starve to death, and that this tradeoff jeopardizes children's current and future health and development by increasing a family's food insecurity. This is known to doctors and researchers as the "heat or eat" dilemma⁵. She further stated:

"These untenable choices wreak havoc on all our citizens, but particularly on the health of our youngest and most vulnerable children. Babies and toddlers ages 0 to 3...are also among the most physiologically vulnerable to cold stress. We know...there is a partially effective medicine to protect children in this current epidemic of energy insecurity. That medicine is called LIHEAP. LIHEAP is a child survival program. LIHEAP is a child health program. LIHEAP is nutrition program, and LIHEAP is a child development program."

While LIHEAP helps Connecticut's most vulnerable and at-risk households, including those with children, older adults and persons with disabilities, afford high home energy costs, it does so much more. At its core, it is a health and safety program that positively impacts overall health and wellness. In our Community Action Agencies, LIHEAP also serves as a gateway to other programs and services families may not have known they were eligible for, such as housing assistance, child care, or Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits. This effective, integrated service delivery approach provides families with the necessary short and long-term support they need to achieve and maintain economic stability.

As you well know, programs like LIHEAP are critical investments in our communities. In 2018/2019, our network processed over 94,000 CEAP applications and provided over 81,400 eligible households with energy assistance (FY 2018/19 data available on page 3). Moreover, this program funnels federal funds right back into our communities, when it pays for delivery of oil, wood pellets and other fuels, helping to keep small businesses thriving.

In closing, our network is pleased to fully support the Department's CEAP 2019/2020 Allocation Plan for the LIHEAP Block Grant.

On behalf of Connecticut's Community Action Network, I would like to thank all of you, as well as Commissioner Gifford and her staff at the Department of Social Services, for your support of and advocacy for this critical program. For your information, I included a list of Community Action Agencies and their phone numbers so you can help your constituents access this program. I am happy to take any questions you may have.

⁴ Climbing Cost of Heating Homes: Why LIHEAP is Essential: Hearing before the Senate Committee on Children and Families, Senate, 110th Cong. (2009) (testimony of Dr. Deborah A. Frank)

⁵ Stephanie Ettinger de Cuba, John Cook, and Deborah A. Frank, *Fuel for our Future: Impacts of Energy Insecurity on Children's Health, Nutrition, and Learning*, Children's Sentential Nutrition Assessment Program (C-SNAP), 2007, available at: http://www.centerforhungerfreecommunities.org/sites/default/files/pdfs/fuel_for_our_future_energy%20insecurity_Sept07.pdf

Table 1: CEAP Caseloads

Agency	CEAP Total Caseload 2018/2019 (final)	CEAP Eligible Caseload 2018/2019 (final)
ABCD (Bridgeport/Norwalk)	10,574	9,065
ACCESS (Willimantic)	6,626	6,073
CAANH (New Haven)	9,335	8,106
CAAWC (Danbury/Stamford)	7,012	5,580
CRT (Hartford/Middletown)	21,284	18,194
HRA (New Britain/Bristol)	6,506	5,131
NOI (Waterbury/Meriden)	21,121	19,079
TEAM (Derby)	3,502	3,124
TVCCA (Norwich)	8,142	7,104
Statewide Totals:	94,102	81,456

Table 2: CT CAA Energy Assistance Contact Information

Agency	Area Covered	CEAP #
Action for Bridgeport Community Development (ABCD)	Lower Fairfield County	(203) 384-6904
	Greater Norwalk	(203) 838-8110
Access Agency (Access)	Willimantic	(860) 450-7423
	Danielson	(860) 412-1568
Community Action Agency of New Haven (CAANH)	Greater New Haven	(203) 285-8018
Community Action Agency of Western CT (CAAWC)	Greater Danbury	(203) 748-5422
	Greater Stamford	(203) 357-0720
Community Renewal Team (CRT)	Central CT	(860) 560-5800
Human Resources Agency of New Britain (HRA)	Greater New Britain/Bristol	(860) 356-2000
New Opportunities, Inc. (NOI)	Greater Waterbury	(203) 756-8151
	Greater Meriden	(203) 235-0278
TEAM (TEAM)	Lower Naugatuck Valley	(203) 736-5420
Thames Valley Council for Community Action (TVCCA)	Southeastern CT	(860) 425-6681