



Energy and Technology Committee Public Hearing Thursday, March 6, 2025  
Submitted by Gannon Long, Chief Program & Policy Officer, Operation Fuel, Inc.

Dear Co-Chairs Rep. Steinberg, Sen. Needleman, Ranking Members Rep. Marra, Sen. Fazio, Vice-Chairs Rep. Sanchez and Sen. Maroney, and Honorable Members of the Energy and Technology Committee:

## **Operation Fuel Opposes S.B. 647, An Act Concerning Protections for Consumer Access to Affordable Electricity**

Thank you for the opportunity to provide written testimony in opposition to S.B. 647, *An Act Concerning Protections for Consumer Access to Affordable Electricity*<sup>1</sup>. We appreciate the goal in seeking to reduce energy costs for Connecticut residents, which all of us share. However, we are especially concerned that this bill threatens essential programs that support emergency assistance, payment plans, energy efficiency, and other programs that struggling ratepayers rely on. The bill would also cause negative economic consequences, particularly in the delivered fuel and energy transition fields. Moving these charges to the general fund, as written, would reduce cost transparency and economic benefits that these investments create.

### **Operation Fuel is the emergency assistance fund for Connecticut families who have nowhere else to go.**

Operation Fuel is a 501(c)3 private nonprofit founded in 1977 during the oil embargo, when energy price shocks destabilized household budgets and the national economy. Today, we continue to provide emergency energy and utility assistance to eligible Connecticut households experiencing financial crisis. We provide direct bill assistance for qualifying Connecticut residents who earn up to 75% of State Median Income (SMI)<sup>2</sup>. Each program season offers struggling Connecticut households a one-time assistance grant up to \$500 towards a utility bill or one-time fuel delivery. More information can be found at <https://operationfuel.org/gethelp/>. Again, for thousands of households, **Operation Fuel is the last option in an emergency.**

Historically, Operation Fuel provided nearly year-round support for Connecticut families struggling to keep up with their home energy costs. As requests for Operation Fuel assistance continues to grow far faster than our funding can support, our seasons have gotten shorter and shorter – now lasting only a few weeks at a time. Our most recent Winter season opened on January 27, 2025. In just over four weeks' time, 5,038 Connecticut households applied for emergency energy assistance from Operation Fuel. **This represents the most applications Operation Fuel has received in the shortest period of time, since our founding in 1977.** As the General Assembly recognized in 2024 when you unanimously

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.cga.ct.gov/2025/TOB/S/PDF/2025SB-00647-R01-SB.PDF>

<sup>2</sup> <https://uwc.211ct.org/connecticut-state-median-income-2023/>



authorized \$1.75 million in additional funds for Operation Fuel<sup>3</sup>, investing in energy assistance is vital for helping our neighbors in need, and reducing uncollectible costs that get passed on to all ratepayers.

S.B. 647 would transfer Operation Fuel’s biggest funding source to the General Fund, leaving our emergency assistance services subject to timing delays, budget cuts, and political negotiations. For households in financial crisis- stable, reliable assistance funding and clear communication are essential. Vulnerable families can’t afford to wait or wonder about where to go when they need help right away. Connecticut households depend on Operation Fuel to keep their lights on and their homes warm. Here are quotes from just a few of your constituents, who have reached out to us, explaining how impactful a \$500 grant means for their family.

- “Operation Fuel has helped my family in a huge way. I was diagnosed with cancer a year and a half ago, so I was unable to work as I was going through chemo and radiation. We ran out of fuel in one of the coldest weeks of the year and this organization was able to grant us fuel to help us out. Much gratitude for the donations and this organization.”
- “The grant from Operation Fuel impacted my family by allowing them to have electricity for their sleep apnea, asthma machine and for the refrigerator to be on for their medication. Also, they helped with gas as well so my children can shower in warm water.”
- “As a senior who has lived in my home for many years, I’ve faced numerous hardships in recent years. Living alone and on a limited fixed income, I’ve struggled to keep up with medical bills and basic necessities like food, all while dealing with the challenges of aging and mobility. The burden of not being able to afford electricity and heat weighed heavily on me, adding to my worries. When I received the notice from Operation Fuel that they could cover my entire electric bill, I broke down in tears. I cried because, in that moment, I felt hope. It gave me the chance to breathe, even just for a moment, it means so much to me.”

As we all recognize, Connecticut’s energy costs are too high for working families to afford. This makes it even more important that we invest in reliable, efficient programs like Operation Fuel, to help.

**Connecticut’s emergency assistance and energy efficiency investments  
generate economic benefits that S.B. 647 threatens.**

In addition to helping Connecticut families in financial crisis, grants from Operation Fuel provide revenue and jobs for small businesses across our state. We collaborate with more than 200 delivered fuel companies, primarily small, family-run businesses, to support emergency requests as quickly as possible. On a regular basis, company partners send us comments like these:

- “Thank you so much for all your hard work. Thank you for always helping. I have a lot of vulnerable households. I try always to work with you. I really appreciate it.” – Sippin Energy (Monroe)

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<sup>3</sup>[https://www.cga.ct.gov/asp/cgabillstatus/cgabillstatus.asp?selBillType=Bill&bill\\_num=SB00111&which\\_year=2024](https://www.cga.ct.gov/asp/cgabillstatus/cgabillstatus.asp?selBillType=Bill&bill_num=SB00111&which_year=2024)

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- “Thank you so much for your help with keeping these people warm!” – DePalma Oil (West Haven)
- “Thank you for your time today and for always getting back to me so quickly” – First Fuel Oil (North Haven)
- “THANK YOU! I appreciate you!!” – Casey Energy (Ridgefield)
- “Thank you guys for the update! Keep making a difference, You're crushing it!” – Clear River Fuel (East Hartford)
- “Looking forward to the new season ahead.” – Hi Ho Energy (Bridgeport)

As Operation Fuel strives to meet the growing demand for emergency assistance, we continue building partnerships with our vendors to streamline program administration and payment times. We recognize that delivered fuel vendors provide services and jobs that can't be outsourced from our state. We are grateful for their continued support for our vulnerable clients.

It's important to recognize that for all ratepayers struggling to pay their energy bills, costs are directly related to consumption – the more we use, the more we pay. While Operation Fuel's primary focus today is securing reliable support for emergency assistance clients, we also note the value of energy efficiency investments for Connecticut's economy. According to the [Connecticut Energy Efficiency Board 2024 Programs and Operations Report](#),<sup>4</sup> issued March 1, 2025 by Energize CT, every \$1 spent on energy efficiency programs yields \$3 in lifetime benefits (page 2), and \$5.20 in clean energy investments (page 6) for Connecticut's economy. Energy efficiency contractors employ thousands of Connecticut residents, helping improve building quality and save money for households and businesses across our state. As page 16 of the report shows, these benefits impact every town in Connecticut. Again, these jobs can't be outsourced; we would like to see the state expand this workforce development investment, and open up more opportunities to meaningful employment for our citizens.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit written testimony. Operation Fuel opposes S.B. 647 because it would reduce funding for emergency assistance and energy efficiency programs that Connecticut residents rely on. Additionally, by eliminating these programs, S.B. 647 would negatively impact Connecticut's economy. We appreciate your leadership and are glad to work with the committee on this and other issues before you. Please contact Operation Fuel's Public Affairs & Policy Advisor, Mike Turaj, at [mike@operationfuel.org](mailto:mike@operationfuel.org) to discuss more.

Sincerely,

Gannon R. Long, MBA  
Chief Program & Policy Officer  
Operation Fuel, Inc.

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<sup>4</sup> <https://energizect.com/media/18646/download?inline>