Trump budget proposes to eliminate LIHEAP and other critical safety net programs

The Administration’s FY18 budget blueprint calls for the elimination of the Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP). Beyond that, it also calls for the elimination of some other long-standing safety net programs that, along with LIHEAP, are among the most efficacious in government, including the Weatherization Assistance Program (WAP).

Specifically, the president’s budget document proposes to “eliminate the discretionary programs within the Office of Community Services, including the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP).”

The budget blueprint goes on to say that “compared to other income support programs that serve similar populations, LIHEAP is a lower-impact program and is unable to demonstrate strong performance outcomes.”

LIHEAP in fact is a high impact program that demonstrates strong performance outcomes. The program was implemented during the Reagan Administration to “assist households with low incomes, particularly those with the lowest incomes that pay a high proportion of household income for home energy, primarily in meeting their immediate home energy needs,” according to HHS.

In other words, LIHEAP was designed to address energy crises and target vulnerable populations most susceptible to extreme heat and cold. In 2016, the program served more than 6 million households with home heating and cooling assistance, weatherization, and/or energy-related low-cost home repairs or replacements. Additionally, more than 70 percent of LIHEAP households had at least one person that was elderly, disabled or was a family with a child in the home. LIHEAP is successfully doing what it was intended to do.

Energy is a life-critical resource. NEUAC encourages mobilizing as supporters of LIHEAP to ensure the continuation of the safety net for those who struggle and sacrifice to pay their heating and cooling bills. LIHEAP is the singular federal program dedicated to reducing the energy burden of low-income families and is uniquely positioned as a flexible block grant to address energy specific needs on a state and local level. LIHEAP also is a highly effective program that helps to preserve the dignity of those living in poverty and assure access to basic energy resources for all Americans.

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