LIHEAP POLICY PRIORITIES

Resources Necessary to Address Energy Insecurity

- $5.1 billion in FY2022 for the Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP)
- At least $4.5 billion in supplemental LIHEAP funding. $10 billion estimated LIHEAP funding is needed to address the economic impacts of COVID-19 on residential energy burden across the U.S.

PROGRAM NOTES
- Expand eligibility to 80% of the State Median Income or 200% of Federal Poverty Level to maximize assistance availability
- Establish an administration threshold of 15% to ensure adequate support for expanded LIHEAP, including resources for outreach to newly eligible households

Escalating Need for Energy Assistance in the Time of COVID-19

LIHEAP is a critical, life-saving program that targets and serves the most vulnerable — older Americans, individuals with disabilities, and children. The majority of these families and individuals survive on less than $20,000 per year; many are on a fixed income. Their pay does not increase when the cost of heating and cooling their homes increases. Living at the lowest levels of poverty, recipients of these funds make choices every day between food, medicine, or utilities - choices exacerbated by COVID-19.

LIHEAP helps to stabilize families and protects people from dying of exposure in their own homes in the winter, keeps electricity flowing to life-saving equipment for those with medical needs, and helps ensure that children do not have to complete their homework in the dark. It prevents disconnection of service, helps families maintain their housing, and restores dignity by helping customers pay bills in full and on time.

Documenting the Deepening Energy Burden Crisis

- The $900 million in supplemental funds provided for LIHEAP in the CARES Act are now fully obligated, and have been able to reach only a fraction of those households that need support.
- Electric and natural gas arrearages were expected to reach $32 billion by the end of 2020, based on an analysis by The National Energy Assistance Directors Association (NEADA). Reflecting the rapidly changing conditions, NEADA estimates that 15 to 20 percent of residential customers are at least 60 days behind on their utility bills.
- More than 1/4 of those who lost jobs during the COVID-19 crisis reported skipping or needing to skip a utility bill payment.
More than 45 million Americans filed for unemployment during the crisis, many of whom remain unemployed or under-employed and are now eligible for LIHEAP.

In some states, 1 in 3 households is behind on utility bills.

22% of utility customers reported that they had reduced or put off expenses for basic needs like medicine and food in order to pay their utility bills.

More than 60% of U.S. K-12 schools reopened virtually for the 2020-2021 school year, underscoring the importance of energy affordability to education access for millions of children.

42% of the U.S. labor force is now working from home fulltime, with many others suffering job loss or reduction of hours. Access to power is critical to maintaining work for the remaining household member(s).

Facts About LIHEAP

According to the NEADA National Energy Assistance Survey of LIHEAP recipient households in 2018,

- 9 out of 10 households have a person vulnerable to temperature extremes because of age or disability - the same persons most vulnerable to serious complications from COVID-19 according to the Centers for Disease Control.
- 1 in 3 households have a child younger than 18.
- 1 in 3 households report that they went without food for at least one day in the past year.
- 3 out of 10 households reported using their kitchen stove to heat their home at least once in the past year. LIHEAP can help families avoid dangerous practices like this in the winter season.
- 1 in 4 households could not afford to fix or replace the broken furnace or cooling system in their home. LIHEAP can help repair and replace broken systems, keeping homes temperate, safe, and energy efficient as families are forced to shelter in place.

The economic repercussions of the pandemic will be felt deep into the winter months and beyond, especially since recovery takes longer or never reaches those at LIHEAP eligibility levels.

Questions? Email info@neuac.org

NEUAC is a leader in the fields of public policy, advocacy, energy and poverty issues. NEUAC currently serves more than 200 member organizations that span the nation, providing tools to advocate for LIHEAP and other funding to support low-income families. The organization bridges the gap between states, social service organizations, and government to empower them to work together and learn from each other in times of energy and poverty crisis.

Sources