

## FFY 2025 Written Public Testimony for the Record

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Katrina Metzler, Executive Director  
National Energy and Utility Affordability Coalition  
PO Box 33878, Washington, DC 20033 | 202-838-8375 | neuac.org

**The Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP)** is America's cornerstone energy safety net program, within the jurisdictional responsibility of the U.S. House Appropriations Committee; Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies. LIHEAP is federally administered by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), Administration of Children and Families, Office of Community Services. It is presently funded at \$4.1 billion, a decrease of more than 50 percent of overall LIHEAP funding since 2021. **The National Energy and Utility Affordability Coalition (NEUAC) respectfully requests LIHEAP funding of \$5.1 billion in Federal Fiscal Year (FFY) 2025 to address the ongoing and emergent needs for heating and cooling assistance in the United States.**

### Introduction

NEUAC, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization, is a broad-based national coalition currently comprised of 272 member organizations dedicated to heightening awareness of the energy and utility affordability needs of vulnerable households, fostering public-private partnerships, and engaging in advocacy, education, and other activities to help address these needs.

NEUAC bridges the gap between states, social service organizations, and government and facilitates cooperation between utilities and community partners to better serve our neighbors in times of energy crisis.

### Summary of Request

For more than 40 years, Congress has demonstrated that LIHEAP is a national priority by repeatedly protecting funding for the program. NEUAC thanks this Subcommittee and its members for their leadership and strong advocacy for LIHEAP. We respectfully request your support again this year to meet the tremendous need for energy assistance for vulnerable households. Maximizing the funding for LIHEAP will ensure that community partners are able to help as many people as possible in FFY 2025.

Increasingly, because of its flexibility as a block grant and the changing landscape of energy access in America, LIHEAP is being called upon to be innovative and address new or emerging energy needs for eligible households. These include [flexibilities during hurricanes and tropical storms](#), [utilizing community solar for LIHEAP income qualified households](#), and [establishing or expanding cooling assistance programs](#).

Our creative and resourceful network of LIHEAP professionals, led by grassroots nonprofits, Community Action Agencies, and local governments, stand poised and ready to implement new programs and practices. However, the resources appropriated by Congress must be available to ensure their success.

## Current Events Support the Need for LIHEAP

- In 2023, the U.S. experienced [28 separate weather and climate disasters](#) costing at least 1 billion dollars. That number puts 2023 into first place for the highest number of billion-dollar disasters in a calendar year.
- Outdoor air quality alerts triggered by wildfires forced people indoors during the summer of 2023, with windows closed during the hottest part of summer. For those suffering from chronic respiratory conditions, this can be a especially dangerous situation. LIHEAP keeps electricity flowing to home health equipment.
- **Extreme weather events are increasing in both frequency and intensity. LIHEAP provides life-saving access to utility assistance during both polar vortexes and dangerous heat domes, protecting households from both extreme cold and heat and providing weatherization services that protect indoor air quality as well and indoor air temperatures.<sup>1</sup>**

## Program Summary

LIHEAP provides support to households with very limited or fixed incomes that helps reduce the percentage of household income spent on utility needs, also known as energy burden. Congress has entrusted states to set income LIHEAP eligibility levels up to 60 percent of state median income or 150 percent of the federal poverty guidelines. Because of funding constraints, many states are forced to set the bar substantially below these thresholds. **Funding is not adequate to address all eligible households and states are forced to make decisions about the best way to serve eligible households – either by increasing the amount of assistance to fewer households, or offering a lesser amount of assistance to more households.**

States are authorized to address heating or cooling assistance and crisis situations with LIHEAP funds. They also may target a portion of LIHEAP funds for residential weatherization to improve energy efficiency and affordability for qualified households. With current funding, LIHEAP is able to serve only about one in six households eligible for services.

## The Case for LIHEAP

### **LIHEAP protects those most susceptible to the dangerous effects of extreme heat and cold**

- [Three out of 10 households receiving LIHEAP used their kitchen stove to heat their home](#) at least once in the year preceding assistance. LIHEAP helps families avoid dangerous heating practices in the winter.
- [One in four households receiving LIHEAP could not afford to address the non-functioning furnace or cooling system in their homes](#). LIHEAP helps repair and replace broken HVAC systems, keeping homes safe and energy efficient.
- [34,000 children were lifted out of poverty](#) because of energy assistance in 2022.
- [48,000 people age 65 or older were lifted out of poverty](#) because of energy assistance in 2022.
- In FFY 2022, [59,180 homes were weatherized with LIHEAP funds](#), improving the health and safety and affordability for those households.
- In 2021: [Hurricane Ida](#) led to 91 deaths across nine states. [Winter Storm Uri](#) killed 259 people and was the costliest U.S. natural disaster on record. The Pacific NW experienced the [deadliest heat wave](#) in the region's history. LIHEAP promotes resiliency during weather-related disasters like hurricanes, heat domes, and polar vortexes. LIHEAP saves lives.

### **Energy remains unaffordable for many Americans**

- The average limited-income household's energy burden is [three times](#) that of other households.
- For families with annual incomes of less than \$35,000, [more than half](#) reported they reduced or went without medicine or food at least once in the previous 12 months in order to pay an energy bill.
- LIHEAP restored power or prevented disconnection [3,226,500 times](#) in FFY 2022.

### **Consistency is key in addressing energy insecurity**

- The [rising costs](#) of energy and other resources are having an impact on affordability. Ongoing support is necessary to continue to address the serious implications of energy insecurity.
- Year-round programming that includes both heating and cooling assistance is becoming increasingly necessary.
- Crisis presents a persistent and insidious state of emergency for LIHEAP families. Consistent and comprehensive funding ensures homes are safe and remain connected to utilities during times of extreme heat and cold.

## Request: Maximize LIHEAP Funding in FFY 2025

Protect older Americans, children, those living with disabilities and chronic health conditions, and other vulnerable persons by maximizing FFY 2025 LIHEAP appropriations at \$5.1 billion. LIHEAP provides energy security for millions of households, ensures access to critical home heating and cooling, provides

weatherization to improve home energy efficiency, addresses energy crises, and protects families in their own homes. NEUAC urges the committee to consider the program's current fiscal and humanitarian challenges and to work with appropriators and HHS leadership to improve the program's budget in 2025 in an expeditious manner.

Thank you for the opportunity to express the views of the National Energy and Utility Affordability Coalition on this important matter. On behalf of the 6 million households annually served by LIHEAP and the millions more hardworking American families that could be served with additional funding, we appreciate your consideration.

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<sup>i</sup> More information can be found at the OCS [Disaster Hub, LIHEAP and Extreme Heat](#) web page and in the updated [Heating Assistance Toolkit](#), hosted by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.