



Low Income Energy Advisory Board

June 23, 2010

Brenda Sisco, Acting Secretary
Office of Policy and Management
450 Capitol Avenue
Hartford, CT 06106

Michael Starkowski, Commissioner
Department of Social Services
25 Sigourney Street
Hartford, CT 06106

Dear Acting Secretary Sisco and Commissioner Starkowski:

On behalf of the Low-Income Energy Advisory Board (LIEAB) I am forwarding to you our recommendations for the 2010-2011 Connecticut Energy Assistance Program (CEAP). Based on the information previously provided by the Department of Social Services (DSS), the Board is recommending the following:

- The 2010-2011 CEAP plan should be crafted using an estimated federal Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) block grant allocation that provides level funding with the 2009-2010 CEAP plan.

DSS has estimated that a level funding approach would result in a federal LIHEAP Block Grant allocation to Connecticut of approximately \$96.9 million. DSS has also estimated that it will have approximately \$10.6 million in carry-forward funds from the current program year.

The Board is recommending that DSS and OPM use an estimated total funding level of \$107.5 million when developing the benefit levels and services that will be provided in the 2010-2011 CEAP plan.

- The 2010-2011 CEAP plan should include a pilot program for year-round intake process where a household applies for and is determined eligible for the current, and as appropriate the following, CEAP program periods. The pilot intake process would include:
 - a. Determination of eligibility for CEAP;
 - b. Application for CAA administered weatherization and any available utility weatherization services;
 - c. Certification of hardship status for winter shut-off protection;
 - d. Arrearage forgiveness program application processing; and
 - e. Completion and processing of a below budget worksheet where appropriate.

The Board recognizes that federal LIHEAP allocations are generally not known with sufficient advance notice to include definitive amounts in the CEAP plan. DSS and OPM have always used estimates in preparing the CEAP plan for approval by the legislature. The President's proposed funding level represents a significant reduction in the base allocations under LIHEAP. Incorporating such a reduction into the CEAP plan would necessitate significant reductions in benefit levels and services. Such cut backs at a time when our State economy is still suffering and the low-income population continues to struggle to meet their basic energy needs would set a public policy tone that is unwarranted and unjustified. Using a "level funding" estimate would maintain the needed benefit levels and services. The CEAP plan always contains language that allows for reductions in benefits or services should the estimated federal funding level not be achieved.

The Board feels strongly that there is a need to assess and evaluate alternatives to the intake process used in the CEAP. This Board has previously recommended that "early intake" provides benefits to the clients as well as the program administrators. The proposed pilot intake program is aimed at expanding this early intake concept so that there continues to be streamlining benefits to clients, and also provides additional administrative benefits. By establishing a pilot program, DSS can identify issues and evaluate benefits that could then be addressed in a broader application. The Board is willing to work with DSS and OPM on the development of the specific parameters that such a pilot may require.

The Board is asking that you support these recommendations as the work continues on developing the 2010-2011 CEAP plan. If you should have any questions, please feel free to contact me.

Sincerely,

Raymond L. Wilson
Chairman LIEAB