

Low-Income Energy and Water Advisory Board Meeting
Hybrid Meeting Legislative Office Building, Rm 1B and via Zoom
April, April 2, 2025, from 1:30 - 3:00 pm
Recorded via Zoom ([Zoom Recording Link](#))

Attendance: Claire Coleman, Nora Duncan, Lydia Santiago, Jaime Soto, Theresa Washington, Joanne Whistnant, Kathleen Wasilnak, Frank Augeri, Jr., Kimberly White, Gannon Long (designee for Perkins Simpson), Nicole Lawton, Jannine Tarantello, Matthew Dillon, Andrea Millard, Matthew Dillon, Shayleen Alfieri, Evannie Bocachica, Michelle Royce Williams, Rhonda Evans, Seema Melani (designee for Victoria Hackett), Cassandra Norfleet-Jonson and Peter Hadler, Zani Imetovski

Absent: Bonnie Roswig, La'Mont Stevenson, Angel Battle, Greg Kirschner

Chairwoman Claire Coleman called the meeting to order at 1:30pm. Chairwoman Coleman noted a press conference led by Senator Lesser addressed recent developments concerning the Federal Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP). It was announced that all LIHEAP staff at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) have been eliminated. The development raises concerns about future program administration, although many details remain unclear. Peter Hadler from DSS emphasized that 90% of LIHEAP funds in theory have already been allocated to the state. However, the program depends on a reimbursement process, and while no issues have been reported so far, the absence of federal staff could potentially impact future operations. Chairwoman Coleman thanked the members who were present during the press conference.

1. Roll Call	(Min. 0:58) Completed by Secretary, Yessenia Santiago-Bejarano.
2. Approval of February 7, 2025, Meeting Minutes	(Min 5:56) Chairwoman Coleman called for Approval of February 7, 2025, Minutes, Motion by Christian Herb, Second by Joanne Whistnant. Abstained: Michelle Royce Williams. No Objections. Minutes approved.
3. Public Comments	(Min 6:35) None.
4.New Business a. DSS demonstration of online application process b. DEEP presentation on WAP c. Working Group report to inform LIEWAB's position regarding including CEAP on the DSS Common Benefits Application d.. Form working group for recommendations regarding 2025-2026 CEAP Allocation Plan	a. (Min 7:43-11:43 and resumed at 32:10-1:01 due to technical difficulty) Cassandra Norfleet Johson, DSS presented along with DSS staff Robin Waddell and Brian Cayer, President of CAPTAIN, who provided online CEAP application demonstration from the customer service and Community Action Agency (CAA) perspective. The live demonstration showed the required demographic fields, household related questions, income verification questions and accessibility to upload documentation. It also requires the applicant to provide their heating source and bill information. The application can be saved and resumed any time during the application process; the application may be completed in an estimated time of

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45 minutes. Upon completion of the application the customer may review all the information prior to submission. The system will remind the applicant of any missing information which may be provided at any point prior to submission. The applicant will receive an email copy of the completed application. Brian Cayer, President of CAPTAIN software presented the online application from the CAA end user view. CAA's can view CEAP applications as received. The system updates every 15 minutes. Applications are viewed in the "DSS waiting room," the CAA worker can manage the waiting, Room. The system will also notify the CAA worker if the application has been processed or if it is a duplicate application. The CAA worker can also verify the account number of the utility bill. The system has many checks and balances.

(Min 46:09-56:08) Question, Answer and/or Comments:

Q: Gannon Long, Op. Fuel: Did the state develop this program or work with a company?

A: Cassandra Norfleet Johnson (DSS) The State did a procurement and Deloitte worked with the State to create this application with the DSS.

Q: Matthew Dillon, Legal Aid: Is the Certificate of Disability a form? Or are you looking for a picture of an award letter? What is the reason behind it?

A: Cassandra Norfleet Johnson (DSS) This is a standalone form to be completed by the applicant's doctor. If the applicant is identified as disabled, they will also be identified as a vulnerable household, and a larger benefit is administered.

Q: cont'd M. Dillon: If the applicant is coded as receiving SSI in IMPACT is the certificate of disability needed?

A: Cassandra Norfleet Johnson (DSS): Yes, as the CAA's do not use social security information, it is the customers' responsibility to provide Cert. of Disability Form.

Q: Theresa Washington, Eversource: Does a Shut Off Notice give a priority review to the CAA?

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A: Cassandra Norfleet Johnson (DSS): Yes, the CAA will reach out to the utility company and alert them the customer has applied for assistance. The customer must also provide the required documentation to complete the application.

Q: Christian Herb, CEMA: This was a 45 min process. Give or take. Is that faster or slower than it used to?

A: Cassandra Norfleet Johnson (DSS)- We believe it is faster as the information received is matched up against DSS IMPACT data.

Q: Janine Tarantello, CLASS: Is eligibility impacted by multiple SNAP household members?

A: Cassandra Norfleet Johnson (DSS): Energy looks at all the people within the dwelling, while the adult members that might have their own individual SNAP awards, [that] makes the household eligible.

Q: Jaime Soto, Avangrid: What time does the website close for applications? Is a banner posted on the website when applications are no longer accepted?

A: Cassandra Norfleet Johnson (DSS): Applications will close at 11:59PM and there is a banner that is posted on the CEAP website and the DSS heating help website.

Q: Andrea Millard, Aquarion: Can the water assistance application be incorporated into this existing system.

A: Cassandra Norfleet Johnson (DSS): We will need to go to HHS to see if additional fields that are not required by the CEAP grant can be added. Also, the CAA workers are supposed to be helping with heating assistance. There would need to be discussion what the CAA's would do with the collected information and if the water vendors are regulated or not.

b. (Min. 12:15-31:32) [WAP Program Year 2025](#) presented by Brian Biernat, DEEP Research Analyst, provided introduction on the program, Budget allocation, CT map of region coverage by grantee. Brian presented proposed program changes on topics of health and safety, budget, heating and domestic hot water systems, weatherization readiness funding, software transition. The goal is 214 total units equally

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distributed in both regions. The WAP program will continue working with the technical consultants Association for Energy Affordability and True View Consultants. CT WAP will issue a Request for Proposal for a training provider; currently Green Jobs Academy is the training provider through summer of PY 2025. DEEP Presented a series of specific questions related to (slides 9-11) Minute 26:39-30:04 include portion of Q&A. CT WAP is currently seeking public input on the proposed changes and will be hosting Public Hearing on April 4th, 2025, from 10:00AM-11:30AM and in the afternoon from 4:30-6:00PM. Written Comments on the presented state plan are due by April 11, 2025.

Q& A Section (during the presentation material)

(Min. 15:02-15:09) A: Theresa Washington, Eversource: is the program funded by HHS?

A: Brian, Biernat, DEEP- No, we are funded by the Dept. of Energy (DOE).

(Min 18:18-21:10) Q: Christian Herb CEMA: Regarding red tagging, can you explain this further, would it require acceptance of weatherization measures to make the money eligible for a red tag system. What happens when tenant is responsible for the equipment, but the landlord does not agree to the weatherization measure?

A: DEEP (Becca Trietch): This regulation is a DOE rule; the owner of the building must agree to the weatherization. We are asking in this updated plan to allow red tagged systems to be eligible and DEEP is looking into whether health and safety funds could be used. DEEP also provides efficiency services through the utilities across the state through Conservation and Load Management Program.

(Min 21:32) Comment: Christian Herb, CEMA: [The red tags] are a subject we can flag for future discussions with Congressional delegations...it does supersede our state policy, but these obstacles exist and present considerable challenges.

Chairwoman Coleman introduced Kimberly White, Attorney from OCC who led the working group with members from DSS, CAFCA, Operation Fuel, OPM,

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Eversource, PURA's Education Outreach and Enforcement Office and the Office of Consumer Council with the preliminary recommendations to review the board's prior recommendation of integrating the CEAP application into DSS common application. The board is looking to form a group of boards members to review the recommendations in the report and present in the next meeting for the Allocation Plan.

c. (Min 1:06-1:10) Kimberly White presented on the report of the working group formed to evaluate whether LIEWAB should continue to encourage that CEAP be placed on the common benefits application, available here: [Working Group Final Report](#). The group met in fall and February to review CEAP participation, finding only 25–33% of eligible EDC hardship customers apply for CEAP. The goal is to increase the number of CEAP applicants. They explored ways to increase applications, including adding a CEAP link to the DSS login page (this was implemented during the working group period however there is no measurable impact yet). Noting, however, the measurable impact will be complex, unless DSS can track the number of clicks in [the CEAP] link to a completed application. Consideration was given to integrating a CEAP prompt at the end of the Common Benefits application for a seamless flow as the applicant has all their information for the common benefits application readily available. Targeted communication was also reviewed. The group found, while targeted information is helpful, the utilities are already sending various messages to customers, from PURA dockets and utility working groups. The group reviewed fully integrating the CEAP application into the Common Benefits application but raised concerns over cost, system design, and funding, which would need to come from LIHEAP funds, as DSS does not have resources to fund this integration. The working group report has detailed bullet points with concerns and the pros and cons regarding each concern referenced on page 10. Overall, the group recommends further discussion on a unified, no-wrong-door approach seen in other states, and further evaluation by the working group

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	<p>that will be formed to develop recommendations for next year's CEAP allocation plan</p> <p>(Min. 1:10-1:12) Questions, Answers, Comments</p> <p>Q: Chris Herb, CEMA asked for clarification on the presentation itself.</p> <p>A: Kimberly White, OCC-the report details several options the Board should consider going forward on the recommendation to provide feedback to DSS and OPM during the plan development.</p> <p>Q: Matt Dillon, Legal Aid: If the CEAP link can be added to the end of the DSS Common Benefits application, will the data pre-populate into the CEAP Application?</p> <p>A: Peter Hadler, DSS: depending on the particular application, the set of questions where the system could be developed and routed [however, this is] dependent on time, resources, and the ability to build it.</p> <p>d. (Min 1:12-1:14) Chairwoman noted any members interested in forming the working group may email board's secretary or the chair herself. Vice Chairwoman Nora Duncan requested a deadline. Chairwoman Coleman noted one week deadline by April 9th.</p>
<p>5. Energy Assistance Program Updates</p> <p>a. DSS</p> <p>b. Operation Fuel</p> <p>c. Eversource</p> <p>d. Avangrid</p> <p>e. Connecticut Water Company</p>	<p>(Min 1:15-1:23) In the interest of time Chairwoman noted that as the reports were previously distributed, Agency representatives can provide a highlight of their reports.</p> <p>a. DSS- see CEAP Report here.</p> <p>b. Operation Fuel- see report here. Gannon Long reported its busiest season in nearly 50 years, receiving over 5,000 applications in a month, highlighting the growing demand for assistance. Over half of applicants faced active or pending utility shutoffs, our database allows us to prioritize these applications. More than half of our households had a vulnerable family member and/or identified as a homeowner. We did income analysis; the average client income was estimated at 31% of the state median. Despite efforts, funding shortages mean hundreds of people who will be denied aid. We</p>

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	<p>continue our partnerships with MDC, Aquarion and CT Water. Water assistance programs saw a surge as well, with two-thirds of annual MDC funding already committed in Q1.</p> <p>Q: Chairwoman Coleman: Does Op. Fuel require customer to get a CEAP assistance prior to applying for Op. Fuel.</p> <p>A: (Gannon Long, Op. Fuel): In years prior yes, but not anymore, if a customer comes in with a shutoff notice they receive assistance. Clients may also provide a CEAP award letter as categorical income eligibility or Social Security Income letter.</p> <p>c. Eversource- by Theresa Washington, see report here. Enrollment in the Matching Payment Program is significantly higher year over year due to approved auto-enrollment of eligible customers, which began in late February with an April 1 deadline. This increase reflects the impact of that directive.</p> <p>d. Avangrid- by Jaime Soto, see report here. Similar to Eversource we had an increase in enrollment due to approved auto-enrollment that was completed by March 31st. We can supplement our report by the end of the week.</p> <p>e. CT Water Company-Michelle Royce- see report here. All our programs on the water side are outpacing enrollment...we granted last year, \$337,000 in LIWAP funds.</p>
6. PURA Docketed Matters Updates and Legislative Updates	<p>(Min 1:24-1:28)</p> <p>PURA- Frank Augeri, Jr. Evidentiary hearings for the United Illuminating rate case begin April 28, and the Yankee Gas case opens for public comment via Zoom on April 9, with hearings starting in late May. Docket 24-09-07, known as the EASE docket, was launched to improve equity, accessibility, and stakeholder engagement. It focuses on four key areas to guide the Authority's efforts in expanding access. Upcoming meetings for this docket are scheduled for April 10, May 13, and June 26.</p>

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	<p>OCC- Chairwoman Coleman noted that OCC has developed online training materials, Paula has brought a QR code to support stakeholder engagement in dockets.</p> <p>Legislative Updates provided by Chairwoman Coleman, lot of bills that address affordability floating around Hb. 6777 presented by CT Water and Bill Number 4.</p> <p>AARP Update- Vice Chairwoman Nora Duncan thanked Chairwoman Coleman for participating in AARP town hall with AARP Members with over 3, 500 on the call on how to take advantage of programs to save on energy costs and questions about the public benefits charge.</p>
7. Public Comments	(Min 1:23) None.
8. Adjournment	(Min 1:28-1:29) Chairwoman Coleman called for a motion to adjourn the meeting, Motion by Chris Herb and second by Gannon Long. No objections. Meeting Adjourned at 3:00 p.m..

Upcoming Meeting Schedule:

May 21, 2025
August 6, 2025
October 1, 2025
December 3, 2025