

Low-Income Energy and Water Advisory Board Meeting

April 1, 2026, 1:31-2:55PM

Recorded via [ZOOM](#)

Approved on June 3, 2026 Meeting

Attendance: Claire Coleman (OCC), Nora Duncan (AARP), Lydia Santiago (CNG), Jaime Soto (SCG), Theresa Washington (Eversource), Joanne Whistnant (Eversource), Kathleen Wasilnak (UI), Brittany Wyman (PURA/EOE), Gannon Long(GPCT), Nicole Lawton (Infoline), Jannine Tarantello (CLASS), Matthew Dillon (CT Legal Services, Inc.), Michelle Royce Williams (CT Water) La'Mont Stevenson (Town of Manchester, Water and Sewer Dept.), Shayleen Alfieri & Evannie Bocachica (Norwich Public Utilities), Rhonda Evans (representative Community Action Agency-CAFCA), Cassandra Norfleet-Jonhson (DSS), Seema Malani (DEEP), Matt Hoppler (on behalf of Zani Imetovski (OPM)).

Absent: Nickey Kollie (CEMA), Bonnie Roswig (Center for Children's Advocacy), Greg Kirschner (CT Fair Housing Center), Angel Battle (representative of Community Action Agency)

Chairwoman Claire Coleman called to order the regular meeting of the LIEWAB to order at 1:31PM on April 1,2026, the meeting was held via ZOOM.

1. Roll Call	(Min.1:12) Chair Coleman noted due to extensive agenda, roll call will be completed via ZOOM chat.
2. Approval of February 11, 2026, Meeting Minutes	(Min.1:57-3:05) Chairwoman, Claire Coleman called for Approval of February 11, 2026, Minutes. Motion by Gannon Long, GPCT. Second Matthew Dillon, CT Legal Services. Abstention by Michelle Royce Williams, CT Water. No Objections. Minutes were approved and adopted.
3. Public Comments	(Min.3:22-3:46) None.
4. New Business: a. Input regarding topics for 2026 LIEWAB Report to General Assembly (see 2024 Report for reference) b. Volunteers for LIHEAP allocation plan working group c. DEEP – presentation regarding CT WAP 2026 d. Matthew Dillon (CT Legal Services) – presentation regarding LIHEAP cooling program	(Min.04:42-07:30) a. 2026 LIEWAB Report: Chair Coleman noted the board is tasked, pursuant to Public Act No. 24-37 to produce the 2026 LIWAB report to the General Assembly and provided an overview of the previous report's contents. The earlier report covered board activities and accomplishments i.e. energy assistance programs such as CEAP and utility-managed programs, energy efficiency, and the board's expanded focus on water affordability. The Chair noted the possibility of adding updated information on federal and state energy assistance advocacy. For the current reporting cycle, the board is seeking suggestions for new topics to include while maintaining a similar overall framework. Nora Duncan, Vice Chair, suggested that the existing table of contents remains largely applicable and proposed setting a deadline for additional input. Chair Coleman indicated May 1, 2026, deadline for members to provide additional input. Chair Coleman noted, OCC hardworking and valuable team has volunteered to complete the drafting and updating of the report. The board plans to share an outline for the report in June meeting, followed by

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a draft report at a later meeting ahead of the October submission deadline.

b. (Min. 07:42-0:10) Volunteers for LIHEAP allocation plan- The Chair noted the board is seeking board member volunteers to form a working group to obtain recommendations for the LIHEAP Allocation Plan, that can then be provided to Dept. of Social Services (DSS) and Office of Policy Management (OPM). The recommendations will be provided to DSS and OPM while they are developing their plan. Board members who volunteered through chat and/or verbally: Rhonda Evans, Matthew Dillon, Thersea Washington and Janine Tarantello, Gannon Long, Brittany Wyman, Nicole Lawton, and non-voting members: Linette Pisani and Cassandra Norfleet Johnson

c. (Min. 0:10-0:27) [CT DEEP WAP Program Year 2026](#), presented by Olivia Colon, joined by Office Director for the Office of Affordable Housing Energy Retrofits, Seema Malani, Ana Hofner and Brian Biernott, Associate Research Analysts, and Kate Sokol, the team's grants and Contracts Specialist. Olivia outlined Connecticut's draft 2026 State Plan for the Weatherization Assistance Program (WAP), which aims to improve energy efficiency, and improve the health and safety for income-eligible households—especially vulnerable groups such as the elderly, disabled individuals, and families with high energy burdens. The plan is being developed in accordance with federal programmatic and financial regulations, though final guidance and funding details from Dept. of Energy (DOE) are still pending. While preliminary work has begun, the program year will not be finalized until official federal instructions and allocations are released. The WAP's estimated program budget is \$4,065,724. Budget allocations were reviewed for grantee and subgrantee covering agency administrative costs, subgrantee i.e.: weatherization readiness funding, health and safety, training and technical assistance, financial audits, and insurance. The two subgrantees are Community Renewal Team and Center for Ecotechnology who have designated regions in the state with an approximate same number of homes that meet the 60% state median income definition of low income. The estimated production goals are to weatherize a total of 214 units across the entire state.

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In program year 2025, several updates were implemented to improve program operations and clarity. These include the creation of advance accounts to help subgrantees pay subcontractors more efficiently, enhancements to monitoring and project review processes, and continued use of approved energy audit software tools. Additionally, updated health and safety and weatherization readiness guidelines were introduced, along with revisions to the technical field guide. Upcoming proposed program changes were reviewed to include increased coordination with the Home Energy Solutions Income Eligible (HES-IE) program to enable more cost-sharing of weatherization measures. With a defined scope of work in place, the program anticipates a higher number of jointly funded units. Additionally, DEEP may leverage other funding sources to enhance services and expand energy-saving opportunities for participants. The team is also working on a Request for Proposal (RFP) for a WAP, Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) service provider. This RFP is currently in process; it will be published on DEEP's website once completed. DEEP has been in collaboration with Hancock developers to launch a self-intake application. This change will allow individuals to apply year-round, including during summer months when the CEAP application does not accept new applicants. Additionally, the team is updating program guidelines, including the operations manual, which will be publicly available upon completion. To meet program goals DEEP works with two technical consultants, Association for Energy Affordability and TrueView Consultants, who assist with technical task and monitoring of in-progress and completed units in WAP. DEEP has issued a request for written comments on WAP draft program year 2026 state plan. Written comments on the state plan will be accepted until April 22nd, 2026, at 11:59 PM. DEEP will hold two virtual public comment hearings on April 15th, the first hearing is from 10 a.m. to 11.30 a.m., and hearing two is going to be held from 4 p.m. to 5.30 p.m.

Question & Answer and/or Comment:

Q:Theresa Washington, Eversource: What is the difference between WAP and HES-IE?

A: Seema Malani (DEEP): they are similar however WAP has funding for health and safety barriers that is not available in HES(IE).

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Q: Janine Tarantello (CLASS) Do you have a timeline on when the self-intake application might be available to customers?

A: Seema Malani (DEEP) Sometime in 2026.

Q: Claire Coleman In addition to WAP, is there remediation as well?

A: Seema Malani (DEEP): Yes, State Bond Commission, funded the barrier remediation funding, which we're looking to add to our existing programs.

d. (Min. 0:28-0:52) [LIHEAP Development of a Cooling Program](#) presented by Matthew Dillon from CT Legal Services- This board presented recommendations for a formalized summer cooling program in the Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program Block Grant Allocation Plan (October 1, 2025-Sept. 30, 2026) to assist with high summer electric costs. Currently, over 30 states have established cooling assistance programs through LIHEAP, using a variety of approaches such as direct bill assistance, provision of air conditioning units, or fans. Funding for these programs has increased significantly between 2018 and 2022, reflecting the growing need due to longer, hotter summers and rising heat indices nationwide, with disproportionate impacts in historically redlined communities that have fewer natural cooling resources.

Neighboring states provide useful models: New Jersey offers a one-time \$300.00 benefit with medical eligibility requirements and allocates about 5% of its LIHEAP budget, while New York provides air conditioners (up to \$800) or fans, with eligibility restrictions tied to vulnerability and prior participation, and allocates about 4% of its budget. According to a 2025 news article, over the past 5 years, New York was able to provide 87,000 households with cooling assistance benefits. Delaware uses a targeted approach that includes both financial assistance and air conditioning units and is considering allocating up to 20% of its budget for cooling. Connecticut could consider formalizing a cooling program through reallocation of LIHEAP funds or additional funding to better support vulnerable households with direct cooling assistance. Some proposals CT may consider is to formalize a cooling program within LIHEAP, which would require reallocating existing funds to accommodate it or a target assistance approach specifically

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to vulnerable households, such as seniors and young children. A third approach is a potential benefit structure that includes direct financial assistance or support for purchasing cooling equipment like air conditioners or fans.

The chair thanked Matthew Dillon for comprehensive report.

Questions & Answers and/or Comments:

Q: Chair Coleman: Do you know whether New York or New Jersey have their cooling assistance programs budgeted within their LIHEAP allocation, or are there any supplemental funds, provided by either state?

A: Matthew Dillon: based on the allocation plan screenshots of the reports, it appears that the funding is specific LIHEAP money and no other state supplemental assistance is used.

Q/Comment: Chair Coleman: The heat index for CT is an area that we can further explore, do you know if NY, NJ and CT are similar?

A: Matthew Dillon: Presumably as they have similar climate to us during winter and summer months.

Q: Theresa Washington (Eversource): The programs that offer a cooling unit (air conditioner or fan) are these programs new pilot programs or programs that have been in existence for a period of time?

A: Matthew Dillion: I do not have the start dates of the programs or exact time frame, however, based on social media post of these programs it appears they have been in effect for a few years.

Comment Gannon Long, GPCT: The CT CARES Act might have offered air conditioning units with LIHEAP budget during the pandemic area.

Response Comment: Cassandra Norfleet Johnson, DSS. To my knowledge over the past decade, LIHEAP funds have not been used to purchase cooling equipment because of the liability of installing a cooling unit and/or appropriate wattage of the air conditioner. Should DSS develop a cooling program there are considerations: including cooling program within the CEAP application, the turnaround time to develop a cooling program which could be a conversation in the subcommittee.

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	Q: Chair Coleman: Was the supplemental assistance provided directly to the utilities or the customer? A: Cassandra Norfleet Johnson, DSS. - DSS sent supplemental assistance to the CAA's to be distributed to the utilities to credit customers' accounts. CEAP is a heating assistance program, if supplemental funding is provided in the summer, assumption would be it goes to bill. Comment: Chair Coleman: NY and NJ offered a qualification of medical necessity, which in CT may be a medical designation for a utility not CEAP, there may need to data matching that requires further examination. Response Comment: Norfleet Johnson, DSS- DSS would need to research in this area.
4. Energy Assistance Program Updates a. Department of Social Services (DSS) b. Generation Power CT (GPCT) c. Eversource d. Avangrid e. Connecticut Water Company	a. (Min.0:53-1:07) DSS CEAP Report presented by Cassandra Norfleet Johnson noting this month's report provides the additional information of deduplicated applications that the board requested along with year-to-date applications taken, denied by CAA region. <u>Questions & Answers and/or Comments:</u> Comment: Brittany Wyman, EOE. There was a complaint received from a customer. A customer reported to be informed if the recipient received SSDI and their disability was not physically visible, a form or letter with the disability must be provided. Customer reports this information is also on the CAA's website. Response Comment- Cassandra Norfleet Johnson, DSS let's take this offline, DSS will- check the website and provide availability times to triage this concern. Request: Chair Coleman Claire requested outcome of DSS review of this complaint. Q: Gannon Long, GPCT- For the pending signature CEAP applications, is there a deadline for applicants to sign? Will these applications be denied at the end of the season if they are still unsigned? A: Cassandra Norfleet Johnson, DSS: Yes, there is deadline for the applicant to sign the application. Customers will receive a letter indicating application cannot be processed until signature is received. The response timeline varies based on application start date. Comment: Rhonda Evans, CAFCA, there are standards of promptness based on when an application can be processed. CAAs have different markers for these standards. It is

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important the customer provides the documentation and signature needed to process their application. CAAs have specific protocols that they need to follow to adhere to the application of policy that has been instituted.

Q: Chair Coleman- There appears to be trend that both applications and approvals have decreased.

A: Cassandra Norfleet Johnson, DSS: DSS is checking in with the agencies and following up on outreach. One piece of information that [we are] unable to ascertain as they are anecdotal stories that could be or could not be true. There is a fear in some households that are income-eligible that may have a non-citizen household member who is unwilling to provide a written statement and ultimately will not apply for CEAP.

Comment: Rhonda Evans, CAFCA, some of the CAAs are experiencing similar anecdotal stories. Rhonda also noted there may be significant changes (in numbers) as there was a significantly increased number during COVID and now [we are] calibrating to a "new" normal.

Comment: Theresa Washington, Eversource, had a campaign to promote CEAP in March. Secondly, speaking from experience we were out in Waterbury [outreach event], customers had a fear of gathering in large groups.

b. (Min.1:07-1:16) [Generation Power CT report](#) presented by Gannon Long, GPCT – The report has been updated with a more polished and visually appealing format and will be published on the website as part of the fourth and final cycle. This cycle received approximately 3,850 applications, with funding available to support an estimated 1,500–2,000 households. GPCT has launched a campaign to respond to the demand for utility assistance, it closes on April 17th. In respect to the water assistance programs, the Aquarion sale was approved. We're not expecting many changes on the program side, but there's some uncertainty around that, so we're working through that process with Aquarion. MDC's water assistance is paused as they are working on changing some guidelines to restrict renters and multifamily residents from getting assistance. There is a concern with the availability of funding with MDC for this year as last year's assistance was expended in June 2025. CT Water is our biggest water program with the continued WRAP program, and we have a great partnership.

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Legislature last year approved \$500,000 for Generation Power for this fiscal year, which was all spent during our March cycle. We are thankful to the board and DSS for partnering with us to get these funds. We are expecting an additional million dollars from the general fund next year, which is going to be a huge help for fiscal year 27.

GPCT submitted information on the medical protection docket and will actively participate in the Energy Affordability Annual Review Docket. Lastly, Generation Power and Neighborhood Housing Services in New Haven are going to the NUAC conference in Seattle this May. We will present on our gas assistance program, which used, fine money from gas companies to remediate barriers and upgrade gas customers' homes to make them safer and more energy efficient.

Questions & Answers and/or Comments:

Chair Coleman noted OCC presenting also in the NUAC conference.

Q: Michelle Williams, CT Water: Is there an estimate of the financial gap for cycle 4 funding?

A: Gannon Long, GPCT: We need to deny 1,000 applications without reviewing them. We don't have the funds to provide the assistance. Assuming each grant is \$500.00 maximum assistance, the gap is about \$800,000.

Q: Chair Coleman- Are applications first come, first serve basis?

A: Gannon Long, GPCT: There are a combination of factors [reviewing and approving applications]. We launched a new database. This database allows us to prioritize applicants who have an active shutoff notice or are out of fuel, and/or have a vulnerable household member.

Q: Chair Coleman- the report reflects 41% applied with CEAP does it equate to 41% receiving funds from GPCT also applied for CEAP.

A: Gannon Long, GPCT: 41% of applications in cycle 4 had categorical eligibility for clients who provided a CEAP letter or have an active SSI Certification. 41% were already approved for CEAP and then applied for GPCT.

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	c. (Min.1:16-1:17) Eversource report presented by Joanne Whistant (Eversource) – Eversource continues the auto-enrollment on the Matching Payment Program (MPP) which took customers off of the Nu Start program who either completed or enrolled into the MPP. The difference of last year to this year, we now have zeroed out that number of NuStart participant. d. (Min.1:17-1:19) Avangrid report presented by Jaime Soto, - congratulated Eversource on the culmination of wrapping up NuStart program. Similarly, UI's Bill Forgiveness program continues to decrease in participation as this program is no longer offered. UI continues to operate with two tier system for the Low-income discount rate, the five-tiered system will go into effect in August 2026. e. (Min.1:19-1:20) CT Water Report – reflects number or program participation and amount credited on customers' bills based on the type of program enrollment. The data is pulled at end of the month, numbers reflected on the report are for Feb. 2026.
5. PURA Docketed Matters Updates	(Min. 1:20-1:21) presented by Brittany Wyman, EOE, requested recommendations from the board on topics of interest to be able to provide to provide additional docket information. Currently, PURA has the following ongoing matters: Aquarion rate case- there is a procedural hearing on Monday. Currently the CNG/SCG remand dockets are ongoing. CT Water filed a letter of intent for a rate case under docket 26-03-15, PURA is ramping up for Annual Affordability docket 26-05-01.
7. Public Comments	(Min. 1:22) Vice Chair Nora Duncan noted Chair Coleman will join AARP for a tele-town hall discussion on high utility costs on 4/6 at 10 am and she will send a follow up email with the infographic on how to join the town hall.
8. Adjournment/ Closing Remarks	(Min.1:23-1:24) Chair Coleman highlighted the following: The Chair and Cochair positions' terms are ending in June. Any board member interested may contact existing chairs with questions. Chairwoman Claire Coleman, called for a motion to adjourn the meeting. Motion by Joanne Whistnant and second by Jaime Soto. No objections. Meeting Adjourned at 2:55pm.

Upcoming Meeting Schedule:

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June 3, 2026ⁱ

August 5, 2026

October 7, 2026

December 2, 2026

ⁱ Subject to change to accommodate planning and approval of LIHEAP Allocation Plan.

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