

Low-Income Energy and Water Advisory Board Meeting

August 5, 2026, 1:31-2:53PM

Recorded via [ZOOM](#)

Attendance: Claire Coleman (OCC), Nora Duncan (AARP), Lydia Santiago (CNG), Joanne Whistnant (Eversource), Kathleen Wasilnak (UI), Brittany Wyman (PURA/EOE), Gannon Long (GPCT), Nicole Lawton (Infoline), Jannine Tarantello (CLASS), Matthew Hellman (CLASS), Matthew Dillon (CT Legal Services, Inc.), Shayleen Alfieri & Evannie Bocachica (Norwich Public Utilities), Christian Herb (CEMA), Michelle Royce Williams (CT Water), Bonnie Roswig (Center for Children’s Advocacy), Rhonda Evans (representative Community Action Agency-CAFCA), Cassandra Norfleet-Jonhson (DSS), Seema Malani (DEEP), Matt Hoppler (OPM)

Absent: Jaime Soto (SCG) Theresa Washington (Eversource), La’Mont Stevenson (Town of Manchester, Water and Sewer Dept.), Greg Kirschner (CT Fair Housing Center), Angel Battle (representative of Community Action Agency).

Chairwoman Claire Coleman called the regular meeting of the LIEWAB to order at 1:31PM on August 5, 2026. The meeting was held via ZOOM. Chair noted roll call would be completed via ZOOM chat as there is packed agenda.

1. Roll Call	(Min.0:01-0:1:12) Completed by via ZOOM chat.
2. Approval of June 3, 2026, Minutes	(Min. 01:27 -03:05) Chairwoman, Claire Coleman called for approval of June 3, 2026, Minutes noting two minor grammatical errors: the spelling of Mike Turaj was corrected it was previously spelled as Tiraj. The second sentence under 4a. reads as “TInclude highlighted” but should read “The Chair highlighted”. Motion by Kathleen Wasilnak (UI), Second Gannon Long (GPCT). No abstention or objections. Minutes were approved and adopted.
3. Public Comments	(Min. 03:20-0:03:35) None.
4. New Business: a. DSS Update on Proposed LIHEAP Allocation Plan b. Draft LIEWAB Biennial Report to the General Assembly c. DEEP Presentation on WAP	a.(Min. 04:10-32:27) DSS Update on Proposed LIHEAP Allocation Plan presented by Deputy Commissioner Peter Hadler (DSS). The LIHEAP Block grant funds CEAP program in CT. LIHEAP is intended to assist households with low incomes, particularly with high home energy burden and/or have vulnerable members (i.e. elderly, disabled and/or minor child) within the household. Households with vulnerable persons may receive a slightly higher benefit throughout the program. DSS administers 3 core components of heating assistance 1) Basic Benefit 2) Rental Assistance 3) Crisis rental assistance with its partners: 9 Community Action Agencies (CAAs), local governments, private human services providers and home energy providers. The proposed LIHEAP budget assumes level funding of approximately \$86 million, supplemented by carry-forward funds and vendor rebates, and plans for 3% enrollment growth based on the prior three-year average. Basic, crisis, and rental-assistance benefits will increase,

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with the largest increase applied to basic benefits. LIHEAP funding for weatherization is paused this year at DEEP's request, though households may still access DEEP's weatherization services. The program will also expand vendor-portal access, extend categorical eligibility to certain means-tested veteran's benefits, and increase the vendor margin over rack from \$0.50 to \$0.55 per gallon while retaining the \$0.35-per-gallon retail discount. An overview of CEAP Benefits timeline starting with early application process begins on Sept. 1, 2026 through May 31, 2027. DSS reviewed benefits matrix structure between federal fiscal year (FFY) which reflects difference from 2026 to FFY 2027 of \$5.00 increase per crisis assistance, i.e. vulnerable level one household last received FFY26 \$1,920.00 is now \$1,995.00 for FFY 27. This year DSS will continue program efficiencies: continuation of benefit structure, continue heating system repair & replacement, maintain DTB- Based vendor pricing model. In the upcoming FFY2027 DSS will enhance the program by expanding 1) categorical eligibility to include the means-tested Veterans Benefit Programs 2) expand vendor portal to allow more vendors to participate 3) targeted outreach via text 4) enhancing online application -accessibility, mobile compatibly and customer service. DSS plans to implement LIEWAB's recommendation to increase LIHEAP's basic benefit and will issue an estimated \$160 supplemental benefit in August to approximately 78,000 utility-heated and deliverable-fuel households. The earlier payment is intended to help offset higher summer cooling costs, while DSS remains open to considering other summer cooling program structures. DSS and CAFCA will continue improving outreach, applications, and referrals through efforts such as text messaging and targeted notifications to Medicaid and SNAP participants who may qualify for LIHEAP. The department is also reviewing denied and incomplete applications to reduce duplicative documentation, improve internal eligibility verification, and provide clearer data on application outcomes. Additional work will evaluate deductible expenses and be reported back to LIWAB. DSS will also continue exploring data-sharing opportunities with water utilities, while accounting for matching limitations and finite administrative resources.

Questions & Answer or Comment:

Q: Chris Herb, CEMA (combined questions): Chris asked whether the projected \$7.4 million carryforward was correct and how it compared with prior years. He questioned how the proposed budget could accommodate projected 3%

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enrollment growth, level funding, increased benefits, and a five-cent increase in the vendor margin. He asked whether the carryforward was higher than in previous years and whether it was supporting the proposed changes. Chris also noted that enrollment has declined in recent years and asked for clarification on the basis for projecting growth.

A: Peter Hadler, (DSS) (combined responses) Peter indicated that the \$7.4 million carry-forward appeared correct and was generally consistent with prior years, when carry-forward amounts have often been close to the federal maximum of 10%. He stated that the proposed increases were based on an analysis of benefit utilization, program participation, and the overall budget, rather than a higher-than-usual carry-forward. Peter acknowledged that enrollment declined in the most recent season but explained that the projection applies modest growth to the average enrollment from the previous three years as a precaution against exhausting funds during critical winter months. He also noted that declines in SNAP enrollment and anticipated Medicaid changes could lead some households to seek LIHEAP assistance.

Q: Matt Hellman (CLASS) asked whether the number of participating oil vendors has declined each year and whether there is concern about having too few vendors to serve the program.

A: Peter Hadler, (DSS) stated that vendor participation has remained generally stable, although the number may fluctuate from year to year. He said the current vendor network provides statewide coverage and multiple options across geographic areas. He also noted that the margin over rack was increased this year to help address vendors' operational costs while balancing those costs against maximizing benefits for participating households.

Q: Gannon Long, (GPCT) stated that LIHEAP funds may be used for remediation costs that create barriers to weatherization and may not be covered by the Weatherization Assistance Program. Gannon noted that some northern states allocate the full allowable 15% of LIHEAP funding to weatherization and suggested that the board consider allocating more than zero in future years. Gannon then asked whether a household needing heating system repair or replacement could apply specifically for that service or would first need to apply for and participate in the energy assistance program. Gannon also asked

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whether the service would be unavailable when program applications are not accepted.

A: Peter Haddler, (DSS) said DSS would continue discussing remediation funding opportunities with DEEP, noting that LIHEAP funding had previously been used for remediation. He explained that heating system repair or replacement is supported by the LIHEAP block grant, so households must meet LIHEAP income-eligibility requirements and submit a LIHEAP application to access the benefit.

A: Cassandra Norfleet-Johson (DSS)- clarified that individuals must be approved for and receive CEAP benefits during the applicable year to qualify for heating system repair or replacement. Applications for this service may remain open until nearly June, even after CEAP applications close, and individuals should contact a community action agency for eligibility review or referrals to other resources.

b.(Min. 32:31-34:59) Chairwoman Coleman noted the [Draft LIEWAB Biennial Report to the General Assembly](#) was previously shared with the board and is requesting feedback today in the meeting or feedback could be provided in the future via email. All responses to the draft Biennial Report should be submitted by August 30, 2026. All comments will be reviewed, and the draft will be finalized by September as the report is due in October of this year.

Questions & Answer and/or comment:

Q:Gannon Long, (GPCT)- thanked the board for the draft report and inquired how to submit comments i.e. word document?

A: Chairwoman Coleman noted comments may be submitted via email, word document, or redline of the draft.

c. (Min. 0:35:26-55:17)[DEEP's Presentation on Weatherization Assistance Program \(WAP\)](#)-presented by Olivia Colon, Research Analyst at DEEP alongside Office Director for the Office of Affordable Housing Energy Retrofits Seema Malani and Grants and Contract Specialist Kate Sokol. Olivia presented proposed 2026 Weatherization Assistance Program state plan, which is intended to improve the energy efficiency, health, and safety of homes occupied by income-eligible households, with priority given to vulnerable and high-energy-burden households. The proposed \$4.5 million federal budget includes

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approximately \$3.8 million for two regional subgrantees and establishes dedicated funding categories for client intake, energy audits, and final inspections. DEEP reported recent program improvements involving contractor advance-payment accounts, monitoring procedures, data-management software, auditing tools, and updated health, safety, and weatherization-readiness guidance. Proposed changes for 2026 include leveraging additional funding sources, selecting a provider for the multifamily weatherization program, and introducing a year-round self-intake application. The program's statewide goal is to weatherize 204 housing units, and DEEP is seeking public input on ways to strengthen the program and serve more clients. DEEP held a Public Meeting to review PY 26 WAP State Plan on July 28th. Public Comments may be submitted via email to DEEP.EnergyBureau@ct.gov by August 5th.

Questions & Answers or Comments:

Q: Gannon Long, (GPCT): Gannon asked how many members of the public attended the July 28th hearing and expressed concern that the public had limited time to review the plan and submit comments. Gannon suggested that DEEP review its public-engagement timeline to allow more meaningful participation from residents and contractors.

A: Olivia Colon, (DEEP) stated that no members of the public attended the hearing.

A: Seema Malani, (DEEP). Clarified DEEP held a public meeting of the PY26 WAP State Plan in months prior to the July 28th public hearing and will extend the deadline for written comments to allow more time for stakeholder comments.

Q: Bonnie Roswig (Center for Children's Advocacy) identified landlord consent as a barrier preventing renters from receiving energy audits and weatherization services. She asked whether DEEP had considered separating lower-impact measures, such as light bulbs and showerheads, from major capital improvements to increase renter participation.

A: Seema Malani (DEE) stated that the program currently requires property-owner signatures when services are provided to renters. She said DEEP would examine options for serving more renters through WAP or the HES-IE program, noting that the agency is already exploring this issue.

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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. 0:55:41-0:55:48) Cassandra Norfleet Johnson, (DSS), DSS will present a CEAP report in the next meeting as DSS is finalizing and closing out the program. b. (Min. 0:55:58-1:06:51) Gannon Long (GPCT) presented Generation Power CT report with the updated water and emergency energy assistance program data, noting that a corrected version of the report would be distributed. Through July 17, water assistance totaled approximately \$28,950 for Aquarion, \$139,000 for Connecticut Water, and \$87,000 for MDC, whose available program funding was nearing expiration. During the fiscal year, the emergency energy assistance program received more than 8,800 applications and assisted over 5,700 households representing more than 13,000 individuals. Electric customers submitted the most applications, oil customers accounted for the most approvals, and approximately three-quarters of applicants applied online. Nearly 48% of clients had lost or were at imminent risk of losing fuel or utility service, while 46% of households included a member in a vulnerable age group, 25% included a person with a disability, and 3% were veteran households. Approximately 83% of clients requested assistance exceeding the program’s maximum grant, and the average household income was 31% of the state median income. Policy updates included PURA’s approval of the medical protection docket report and related funding, participation in the Energy Affordability Annual Review Docket, and monitoring of proceedings involving gas discount rates, clean-energy programs, performance-based regulation, and stakeholder compensation. <u>Questions & Answers or Comments:</u> Q: Chairwoman Coleman- asked why approval rates were higher for delivered-fuel households—approximately 82% for oil and 76% for propane—than for electric and gas households, at approximately 45% and 53%. A: Gannon Long, (GPCT) explained that applications are prioritized based on emergency status, household vulnerability, and available resources, with delivered-fuel households often receiving priority because households without fuel have fewer alternatives than utility customers who may access shutoff protections or payment plans. Gannon also noted that utility applicants must meet additional requirements, including having a past-due balance and making at least four payments within the previous 12 months, while oil applicants generally need to
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meet income requirements and select an eligible vendor. The smaller number of applications for delivered fuels other than oil may also make their approval percentages less representative. The PY27 calendar was also presented reflecting a change from 4 cycles of 9 days to 3 cycles of, 15 days.

Q: Seema Malani (DEEP) asked what the annual budget is for the program?

A: Gannon Long, (GPCT)- The organization distributed approximately \$2.7 million in emergency energy assistance and has an annual budget of roughly \$5 million to \$6 million.

Q: Joanne Whistnant (Eversource) asked whether additional application periods would be available for customers seeking assistance with oil and utility bills.

A: Gannon Long, (GPCT) No changes to the current schedule were anticipated.

Q: Chairwoman Coleman asked whether the organization receives funding from deliverable-fuel companies.

A: Gannon Long (GPCT) Gannon stated that the organization does not receive grants from those companies, although some make voluntary contributions to support its work.

d.(Min. 1:07-01:08) [Eversource](#) report presented by Joanne Whistnant (Eversource) – Eversource provided year to date data on enrollments of Low-Income Discount Rate and Matching Payment Program (MPP) highlighting approximately 200,500 customers are enrolled in the electric discount rate program, with most receiving either the 15% or 50% LIDR discount. She noted that a substantial number of customers are enrolled at the 50% discount level. The Matching Payment Program serves approximately 28,000 electric customers and 11,000 gas customers, totaling about 40,000 participants. Compared with the prior August, participation differed by approximately 3,000 electric customers and 500 gas customers, which Joanne attributed to Matching Payment Program (MPP) awards. Previously, MPP awards were credited toward required repayment amounts under payment arrangements; following program adjustments, they are applied directly to customers' outstanding balances, reducing the total amount owed.

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d. (Min. 01:08-01:13) [Avangrid report](#) presented by Kathleen Wasilnak (UI), presented monthly and year-to-date enrollment on CNG, SCG, and UI's programs. Kathleen reported that nearly 38,000 customers were enrolled in the Matching Payment Program (MPP) in June, compared with 47,000 the prior year; changes to program criteria may partly explain the decline. UI's BFP program had approximately 5,700 remaining participants, and enrollment is expected to continue declining as customers complete the program year or lose eligibility for reenrollment; qualifying customers may transition to MPP. UI also replaced its two-tier discount structure with five tiers and reported approximately 72,000 participants across all five tiers. CNG and SCG are implementing a 10% LIDR discount gas. Kathleen noted she would send over an updated report with enrollment data with the implementation of the new five tiers.

e.(Min. 01:13:24-01:16) [CT Water Report](#) presented by Michelle Williams, reflects number or program participation and amount credited on customers' bills based on the type of program enrollment. Michelle reported that CT Water provided more customer assistance in 2026 than in 2025, largely through its partnership with Generation Power, which also supported income reverification to prevent interruptions in rate assistance. A corrected total of 2,057 customers received assistance and participated in WRAP, as customers qualifying for H2O or Generation Power assistance are automatically enrolled in the rate assistance program. Payment-plan enrollment was approximately 200 customers lower than at the same time last year, which she attributed to customers gradually resolving balances carried forward from the COVID-era shutoff moratorium and extended payment arrangements. Michelle also plans to incorporate year-over-year comparisons into future reports and invited suggestions for additional information.

5. PURA Docketed Matters Updates

(Min. 01:17-01:21) presented by Brittany Wyman (EOE) PURA updates on the following dockets: CNG/SCG rate case 25-11-13/25-11-14 is wrapping up, Written Exceptions are due 8/18 and Oral Arguments are on 8/24; PURA is reviewing the 26-02-06: Gas LIDR; 26-05-01: Annual Affordability Docket - technical meeting via zoom tomorrow at 10; 26-03-15: CWC Rate Case - Public Comment Hearing in East Hampton on 8/10 at 5:30 and

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	virtually on 8/26 via zoom at noon; 26-05-10: Eversource Rate Case - Scheduling Conference on 8/11. <u>Comment:</u> Gannon Long (GPCT) requested that future meeting materials include a slide or one-page summary of key dates, figures, and relevant links. Gannon also raised concerns about recurring technical problems that prevented the public from viewing PURA proceedings scheduled for YouTube livestreaming and asked that the accessibility issue be addressed. Response: Brittany Wyman (EOE) said she would speak with Chair Coleman about potentially adding the requested information to the agenda or developing another format. She indicated that livestreaming problems may already be under review but was uncertain whether the failures originated with YouTube or PURA's technology. Brittany said she would note that the issue was raised during the meeting and flag it for possible higher-level review.
7. Public Comments	(Min. 01:21) None.
8. Adjournment/ Closing Remarks	(Min. 01:22-01:23) Chair Coleman highlighted the following: next meetings happen October 7, 2026. Chairwoman Claire Coleman, called for a motion to adjourn the meeting. Motion by Joanne Whistnant second by Gannon Long. No objections. Meeting Adjourned at 2:53pm.

Upcoming Meeting Schedule:

October 7, 2026

December 2, 2026