

Low-Income Energy and Water Advisory Board Meeting

June 3, 2026, 1:33-2:46PM

Recorded via [ZOOM](#)

Attendance: Claire Coleman (OCC), Nora Duncan (AARP), Jaime Soto (SCG), Theresa Washington (Eversource), Joanne Whistnant (Eversource), Kathleen Wasilnak (UI), Brittany Wyman (PURA/EOE), Gannon Long (GPCT), Mike Tiraj (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 & Nickey Kollie (CEMA), Michelle Royce Williams (CT Water), Bonnie Roswig (Center for Children's Advocacy) Cassandra Norfleet-Jonhson (DSS), Seema Malani (DEEP).

Absent: Lydia Santiago (CNG), Kathleen Wasilnak (UI), La'Mont Stevenson (Town of Manchester, Water and Sewer Dept.) Rhonda Evans (representative Community Action Agency-CAFCA), Greg Kirschner (CT Fair Housing Center), Angel Battle (representative of Community Action Agency), Zani Imetovski (OPM).

Chairwoman Claire Coleman called the regular meeting of the LIEWAB to order at 1:33PM on June 3, 2026. The meeting was held via ZOOM also noting CT Network also present and recording this meeting. The Chair commended LIEWAB board members who attended the National Energy and Utility Affordability Coalition (NEUAC) conference. Highlighting Office of Consumer Counsel's (OCC), Paula Pineda, representation on the panel on automation for affordability, smarter pathways to energy assistance along with the progress Connecticut has made with data sharing. Generation Power CT's Gannon Long and Mike Tiraj were on panels on effective advocacy on healthy home and energy efficiency programs. The conference provided updates on LIHEAP funding, noting the current presidential administration, for the sixth consecutive time, did not include LIHEP as part of the 2027 federal fiscal budget. However, LIHEAP funding has historically been supported by Congress to ensure funding is in place.

1. Roll Call	(Min.1:41-4:34) Completed by Secretary Yessenia Santiago-Bejarano.
2. Approval of April 1, 2026, Meeting Minutes	(Min.7:39 -8:21) Chairwoman, Claire Coleman called for Approval of April 1, 2026, Minutes. Motion by Jaime Soto (SCG) Second Matthew Dillon (CT Legal Services). No abstention or objections. Minutes were approved and adopted.
3. Public Comments	(Min. 8:27-8:46) None.
4. New Business: a. Review of Working Group Recommendations for 2026-27 LIHEAP allocation plan b. Nominations and Election of Board Chair and Vice Chair	a. (Min.9:05-0:19) Review of Working Group Recommendations for 2026-2027 LIHEAP allocation plan. Chair Coleman thanked the efforts of the OCC, Kimberly White, and members of the working group for the recommendations presented today. TIncluder highlighted the recommendations from the prior year were incorporated into this year's plan with additional recommendations as follows: 1)increase in basic benefit 2) disbursement of supplemental assistance sooner, noting the board has put a pin in formalizing opportunities to address funding to include cooling based on DSS concerns noted in prior meeting 3) Improve Application & Referral process

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	(including but not limited direct referral from completion of common benefits application to CEAP application via electronic or mobile communication.) Recommendations to DSS to research and create action steps on denied or incomplete applications. Annual updates on outreach should the Allocation Plan include funding for this activity. 4) Share CEAP benefits level with CAAs and utilities, this will assist the utilities in identifying proper Low-Income Discount Rate Tier. 5) Examine Deductible expenses-study allowable deductions in LIHEAP policy, provide results of study on or before April 2027. 6) Data sharing with water utilities – recommends DSS to data collaborate with utilities to establish data sharing similar to the current electric and gas utilities data sharing. 7) Maximize internal data to identify “vulnerable households” by reviewing categorical exemptions to inform CEAP eligibility. Comment- Vica Chair Nora Duncan noted that the plan should incorporate language to reflect plan recommendations may or may not be impacted the with recent and ongoing changing federal guidance with SNAP, Medicaid and federally funded programs. Chair Coleman noted the following language can be added to the plan “LIEWAB recommends DSS to ensure alignment with changing federal eligibility standards and promotes eligibility, access to the greatest extent possible” With the incorporation the added language Christian Herb moved for a motion to approve the document with the suggested changes. Second by Gannon Long. No abstentions or objections. b. (Min.0:19-0:22) Nominations and Election of Board Chair and Vice Chair. Chair Coleman noted she and the current Vice Chair are prepared to serve another term absent from any other nominations presented during the meeting. Chair Coleman nominated Nora Duncan to Vice Chair. Second by Christian Herb (CEMA). Voice vote was completed. Michelle Royce Williams nominated Claire Coleman second by Jaime Soto. Voice vote was completed. No objections or abstentions.
4. Energy Assistance Program Updates a. Department of Social Services (DSS) b. Generation Power CT (GPCT)	a.(Min.0:24-0:37) DSS CEAP Report presented by Cassandra Norfleet Johnson noting that as of May 29, 2026,11:59pm, CEAP applications are no longer accepted however post-marked (by or before May 29th) paper mailed

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c. Eversource d. Avangrid e. Connecticut Water Company	applications will be accepted and processed. Cassandra noted the Community Action Agencies (CAAs) have been doing a great job processing applications. The current report continues to reflect year to date applications received, approved and denied. The data has been de-duplicated and provides level of detail of the number of applications denied and data sets for the denial i.e. missing social security or income. The data also provides applications by fuel and rental type. <u>Questions & Answer or Comment:</u> Q: Christian Herb (CEMA)- Can the data presented be provided over a longer time, ie. 5-6 years versus year to date. There continues to be a decline in the number of applications despite increase in utility and fuel costs. A: Cassandra Norfleet Johnson, DSS: that request may be an additional recommendation by the board to provide applications denied by CAA area/region. DSS continues to investigate the decline in numbers as there is increase in number of households applying for utility and deliverable fuel decreasing. Comment: Chair Coleman notes it would be valuable to add additional information to the report to see pre-Covid trends and to examine other drivers. Q: Matthew Dillion (CT Legal Services)- Where did the board land with the CEAP application integration into the basic benefits application? A: Chair Coleman notes the language in the recommendation is that the board will keep evaluating from time to time [for this integration] as there are fiscal and administrative objections by DSS and Office of Policy Management. The current recommendation in the plan presented today suggests language to inform customers upon completion of the basic benefits to consider applying for CEAP. The board is also recommending modern technology outreach. Comment- by Cassandra Norfleet Johnson (DSS)-DSS would like to manage expectations with outreach that is completed in person as there may be a one-to-one correlation metric to reflect increase in applications. However, marketing outreach i.e. social media or e-blast may not capture a direct correlation of increased applications. DSS will continue to flag these recommendations. Comment- Jaime Soto (SCG) provides kudos to CAAs as Avangrid received influx of emails requesting customer information in assistance with certifying applications.
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b. (Min.0:38-0:51) [Generation Power CT report](#) presented by Gannon Long (GPCT) – The organization continues to experience strong demand for utility assistance services, serving approximately 5,000–6,000 households annually. However, funding constraints have reduced the number of days programs remain open each year, making the most recent fiscal year the shortest operating period in recent history. Water assistance programs remain active, though funding levels are becoming limited. Aquarion and MDC each have about \$20,000 remaining for the year. Aquarion’s funds are expected to last longer because its grants are smaller, while MDC’s larger grants may cause available funding to be exhausted sooner. Connecticut Water continues to provide substantial support through both direct assistance and discount-rate programs. The Emergency Energy Assistance Program operated through four funding cycles this year and tested a new service model. The organization plans to reopen the program in early Fiscal Year 2027 and will provide additional updates as planning continues. Most assistance funding was provided to households using oil as their primary heating source, followed by electricity and natural gas customers. Approximately 75% of applicants submitted requests directly through the online portal, demonstrating significant use of digital application tools. Client demographic data revealed a notable shift, with renters making up the majority of households served this year, which differs from Connecticut’s overall housing trends that generally show a slight homeowner majority. The organization also continues to track household vulnerabilities, including medical needs and utility shutoff risks. Income data indicate that assistance is reaching households with substantial financial need. The average household consisted of two people and earned about 37% of Connecticut’s State Median Income, or slightly less than \$35,000 annually. GPCT continues involvement with PURA dockets, we recently finalized contributions to the medical protection docket and are now engaged in the Energy Affordability and Review Docket. Most recently GPCT met with DEEP and CEMA to begin planning for winter heating prices due to the global disruptions in the energy markets.

Questions & Answers or Comments:

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Q: Chair Coleman- the 37%SMI triggers a financial hardship designation in the utility space, does this designation provide other protections and resources?

A: Gannon Long (GPCT)- We do not have the capacity like the CAAs to enroll or apply for other hardship programs as we only provide energy assistance.

Q: Theresa Washington (Eversource)- Did the customers in the 37% SMI apply for CEAP benefits first?

A: Gannon Long, GPCT- 37% SMI is the average for all applicants, about a quarter of our clients have received CEAP benefit before GPCT award.

d.(Min.0:53-1:01) [Eversource](#) report presented by Joanne Whistant (Eversource) – Eversource provided year to date data on enrollments of Low-Income Discount Rate and Matching Payment Program (MPP).

Questions & Answers or Comments:

Q: Chair Coleman- Are there any insights as to the reason for decrease in MPP?

A: Theresa Washington (Eversource): Yes, there are drops in MPP and it is difficult to compare year-to-date data with the new designs [of LIDR and], customers can be removed from MPP and then re-enroll. There are some customers who may actively be on MPP during the whole winter seasons. Eversource completed its first year of LIDR and with the removal of the stay out period, it will be difficult to pinpoint a specific trend at this time.

Q: Christian Herb (CEMA)- New Start continues to run in other states, did CT stop this program?

A: Theresa Washington (Eversource)- Yes, Eversource launched a redesign of the MPP which incorporates aspects of the New Start Program and it has been easier to educate customers about this program.

Comment: Matthew Hellman (CLASS)-An anecdotal comment from customers. There is a financial hardship for clients on a fixed plan with MPP, where some clients' payments are several hundred dollars and financially not feasible and therefore, they fall off the program. There is (one) the financial payment barrier and (two) a program barrier of the stay out period.

Response: Theresa Washington (Eversource) PURA has lifted the 12 month stay out order, we are working out implementation of those changes with PURA's guidance.

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	Comment: Jaime Soto (SCG)- A clarifying comment, the MPP calculations are based on the customers' usage not the total balance that is owed at the time of enrollment. d. (Min.1:01-1:04) Avangrid report presented by Jaime Soto (SCG), presented monthly and year to date enrollment on CNG, SCG, and UI's programs. A trend that we have noticed is customers are removed from MPP program upon completion of payment arrearages. The new design also matches the client's payment for payment; customers are getting faster release of their balances on their accounts. UI will be transiting to the five-tier payment of LIDR in a couple of months. e.(Min.1:05-1:09) 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 in the report are for May, 2026. <u>Questions & Answers or Comments:</u> Q: Theresa Washington (Eversource) Do the water assistance programs offer a discount rate? A: Michelle Royce Williams: Yes, there is a three tiered discount rate, 100% federal poverty level (FPL) receives an 80% discount on the water bill, 200% FPL receives 40% discount and 60% state median income receives 10% discount. Income verification is completed by social service agencies and GPCT. Comments- Chair Coleman- there is currently a discrepancy in both regulated water companies providing updates as CT Water is providing data, but Aquarion is not, due to Aquarion's transitions with the sale, reports weren't previously provided. The board will look to rectify this reporting.
5. PURA Docketed Matters Updates	(Min. 1:09-1:14) presented by Brittany Wyman (EOE) PURA updates on the following dockets: 26-05-01 Affordability review- written comments due tomorrow 6/4, Notice of Proceeding was issued on docket 26-02-06, to review multi-tiered low-income discount rate for gas companies. Currently there are also a few water rate cases: Aquarion 25-12-12 and CT Water 26-03-15. Eversource notified PURA it will be filing for a rate increase in July, this docket is 26-05-10.
7. Public Comments	(Min. 1:15) None.

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8. Adjournment/ Closing Remarks	(Min.1:15-1:16) Chair Coleman highlighted the following: next meetings will focus on DSS allocation plan to prepare for the joint legislative hearings in August. The board will start the planning of the bi-annual report in August which is due in October to the legislature. Chairwoman Claire Coleman, called for a motion to adjourn the meeting. Motion by Christian Herb and second by. Joanne Whistnant No objections. Meeting Adjourned at 2:46pm.
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Upcoming Meeting Schedule:

August 5, 2026

October 7, 2026

December 2, 2026