

## **WAP Public Hearing Transcript**

Original Date: April 4<sup>th</sup>, 2025, from 10 – 11:30AM

Location: Virtually and in-person at 10 Franklin Square, New Britain, 06051. Hearing Room 1.

### **Seema Malani (DEEP):**

Good morning, everyone. I am Seema Malani, Director for the Office of Affordable Housing Energy Retrofits at DEEP.

Thank you for joining us today. This public hearing is for the one-to-four unit Weatherization Assistance Program (WAP) for low-income persons. This program plays a vital role in helping low-income households reduce energy costs, improve comfort, and enhance health and safety.

We are here to review and gather feedback of the draft proposed 2025 WAP State Plan which we intend to submit to US Department of Energy by April 25<sup>th</sup>.

Your voice matters because the decisions we make in this plan don't just live on paper, they affect real people in real homes in every part of our state.

Whether you've experienced weatherization services yourself or you work with families in need or simply care about energy justice, your input helps us shape the plan that's responsive to community needs and rooted in lived experience.

Before we dive in, I'd like to introduce a few members of our team who will be guiding us today. Brian will be presenting the program overview and walking us through the slide deck.

Yessenia and Olivia are managing logistics onsite. If you need anything while you're here, including parking validation, please see them.

Olivia and Ana will be monitoring the chat. These will become part of the public record. Though we may not be able to get to all the questions, we will try our best.

If you wish to speak, use the "raise hand" function. And just like we saw, this meeting is being recorded. If you are here in person, please ensure you're parked in the garage and see Olivia for parking validation.

If you'd like to submit written comments after the hearing. We'll be accepting, accepting them through April 11th before midnight. Email them to [deep.energybureau@ct.gov](mailto:deep.energybureau@ct.gov).

Or send us via US Mail to DEEP's Energy Bureau of Energy and Technology Policy, 10 Franklin Square, New Britain, Connecticut.

Thank you for being here and sharing your voice. Let's get started. Over to you, Brian.

**Brian Biernat (DEEP):**

Alright. Thank you very much. Welcome to the WAP public hearing for the State Plan for Program Year 2025. This is the one-to-four unit Weatherization Assistance Program.

Next slide, please.

So the introduction to the State Plan that we're discussing today is the single-family Weatherization Assistance Program.

The purpose of the program is to increase energy efficiency in dwelling units occupied by income eligible individuals and to improve their health and safety, especially for individuals and households identified by DOE as vulnerable.

This includes elderly, disabled, young children, high energy users, and high energy burden individuals.

And it's in compliance with Federal regulations. 10 CFR 440, and 2 CFR 200. I'm sorry. Next slide, please. This is the annual budget that we have allocated for PY25.

On this first slide, there is the annual budget we have allocated for PY25. First slide there is the federal allocation of PY 2025 which totals to \$4,065,724.

The next slide here we have the next table. Here is the grant distribution which is the DEEP administration, which totals to \$100,708, and we have the DEEP training and technical assistance which totals \$567,284. And the grantee total for our portion of the grant here at DEEP is \$667,992.

The next part of the table is a Subgrantee distribution which includes administration, program support, health and safety, technical and training assistance, financial audits, insurance, and weatherization readiness funds. And that totals to \$3,397,732.

Next slide please. So here on the next slide we have the weatherization regions.

So Region One is served by Community Renewal Team and that's in the color blue here.

And then the color red is Center for EcoTechnology. The WAP regions were created to equally divide the number of homes that meet the 60% SMI definition of low-income.

Next slide, please. So the proposed program changes that we have this year include the topics of health and safety budget, heating and domestic hot water systems, weatherization readiness funding, and software transition.

In the health and safety budget category, previously, WAP has allocated 15% of the program operations budget for health and safety issues based on the number of health and safety issues found. CT WAP is proposing to allocate 23% of the program operations budget to address health and safety issues.

And for heating and domestic hot water systems, this year, heating systems will only be repaired in WAP if they are counted as an ECM.

Heating systems and replacements under health and safety are only to be considered under special circumstances.

WAP can only replace inoperable or red-tagged heating systems in households that agree to receive comprehensive weatherization services.

We have requested DOE approval to replace domestic hot water systems utilizing the same review criteria as a heating system.

Under weatherization readiness funding, we have the entire weatherization readiness funding allocation will be given to the weatherization subgrantees and this funding can be used to address issues listed in the WRF State Plan.

As far as software transition goes, this year in PY25, DEEP will seek approval to continue utilizing the DOE Waweb suite of software, including NEAT and MHEA.

CT WAP will pursue the use of Hancock's energy audit tool, MINT, in the future program years to better coordinate our database system, which is based in Hancock.

And next slide, please. So for our production goals this year, we plan on serving 107 households in Region One and 107 households in Region Two, totaling for 214 households served this program year.

Our technical consultants and training providers are AEA, TVC, and our training provider is Green Jobs Academy.

For AEA, we've had them do the desk reviews, waiver reviews, as well as the technical writing.

And for TVC, they will be doing in-progress monitoring, final inspections, and annual technical monitoring.

And for Green Jobs Academy, they will be doing comprehensive and specific trainings.

Green Jobs Academy is our training provider through the summer of 2025, at which point we will be holding an RFP for a comprehensive IREC certified training provider.

Next slide. Thank you. Opportunities for public input.

So here we have several questions that we are asking for input on.

We'll go on to discuss some more on the next slides.

So DEEP has issued a request for written public comments on the draft PY25 WAP State Plan. These written comments are due by April 11<sup>th</sup>, 2025, at 11:59PM. And we are asking for people to send written comments to [deep.energybureau@ct.gov](mailto:deep.energybureau@ct.gov).

A full notice is available at the DEEP weatherization website which we include a link to in the slide as well. DEEP seeks public input specifically on the amount of funds allocated to health and safety.

We seek public input on the weatherization measures being provided through WAP. We also look for public input on the use of Weatherization Readiness Funding.

For the first topic we have the weatherization health and safety funding level.

So DOE requires all grantees to allocate funding to indicate the amount of federal funds to be used to mitigate energy related health and safety hazards which are necessary to the installation of weatherization measures in accordance with 10 CFR 440.16(h) and 440.18(d)(15).

Grantees must set health and safety expenditure limits for their Subgrantees, providing justification by explaining the basis of setting these limits and providing related historical experience, including frequency and costs.

These limits may vary depending upon conditions found in different geographic areas. Across the country, 15 to 25% of the program operations budget, which is how health and safety is allocated, is allocated to health and safety issues found in client homes.

CT WAP has historically kept the health and safety funding at 15% of the operations budget.

CT WAP is currently seeking DOE approval to increase the health and safety funding to 23% based on the high deferral rates reported by WAP Subgrantees.

So specifically, we are looking for input on whether 23% of the program operations budget is a reasonable allocation to health and safety measures. We are also looking for input on if this amount should be increased or decreased, and we're looking for data to support the justification between increasing or decreasing the health and safety funding.

Next slide, please. Weatherization energy conservation measures.

So this is the next topic that we're looking to get some public input on. CT WAP is currently in the process of reapplying to be able to utilize the DOE Weatherization Assistant web-based energy modeling software as part of the application process.

DOE allows the grantee to revisit types of materials and equipment installed as part of weatherizing a home. DOE allows standard weatherization measures found in 10 CFR 44 Appendix A, but CT WAP is also exploring additional items, such as LED lighting; air conditioning repair or replacement; refrigerator repair or replacement; heating and ventilation system tune, repair, or replacement; domestic hot water system repair or replacement; water conservation measures; heat pump technology; as well as solar technology.

DEEP is seeking input on whether we should prioritize any or all measures listed above for inclusion in CT WAP and reasons behind that.

We're looking for, as well, any additional technologies that should be considered and any studies of data that support energy conservation or energy cost savings of recommended technologies.

And the final topic that we're looking to discuss is the Weatherization Readiness Funding.

The purpose of WRF is to allow WAP to address necessary repairs, health and safety, structural, etc., and dwelling units that have been previously deferred from receiving weatherization services.

Specifically, funding is targeted to reduce the frequency of deferred homes that require services outside the scope of weatherization before weatherization services can commence. All units receiving WRF must result in a DOE completion defined as a dwelling on which a DOE approved energy audit or priority list has been applied and weatherization work has been completed.

CT WAP has allocated a portion of WRF, Weatherization Readiness Funding, for weatherization readiness activities.

These activities are limited to activities listed in the weatherization readiness fund state plan, including roof, repair wall repair, interior exterior ceiling, repair floor, repair foundation or subspace, repair, exterior drainage, repairs, plumbing repairs, electrical repairs and remediation, or cleanup of lead, mold, and asbestos.

CT WAP is looking for input on whether there are additional health and safety barriers to weatherization that are regularly encountered. If so, what other barriers are common in Connecticut, and what research or data can be provided to support the presence of these other barriers?

And this is a slide, we are basically just presenting the opportunities for public input and public comment.

So today is Friday, April 4<sup>th</sup> and we're having hearing number one, the morning hearing this, which is occurring from 10AM to 11:30AM.

And hearing two will be in the afternoon from 5PM to 6PM and in Hearing Room Number 2. Written comments on the State Plan are due by April 11<sup>th</sup>, 2025, at 11:59PM.

And comments may be addressed to the [DEEP.energybureau@ct.gov](mailto:DEEP.energybureau@ct.gov). And Zoom links are also posted on our public hearing notice for both this hearing as well as the afternoon hearing. And the state plan, also posted on the DEEP weatherization website.

And so this wraps up our public hearing as far as the presentation goes. And I believe now we'll go on to opportunity for public comment.

**Seema Malani (DEEP):**

Thank you, Brian.

We're looking for public comments.

Any feedback on our questions. Brian, do you mind going back to the questions? Or maybe Olivia is managing the slide deck if we can.

At this time we have not received any public comments, either in person or in the chat or via raise hands. We'll be here in case someone wants to comment.

**Ana Hoepfner (DEEP):**

We have received one comment from Marifer Rodriguez. It says "to address the first question, I think CT WAP should increase the health and safety allocation from 15% to the higher end of the national range, 20% through 25%. This way homes with health and safety barriers have a better chance at receiving comprehensive weatherization services".

Thank you for your comment.

**Seema Malani (DEEP):**

Thank you, Marifer. I think it's nice to hear that we are on the same page. And yes, that is the reason that we are looking to increase the health and safety budget to 23%. It will help us get units to the finish line to get them weatherized. Once we are able to address the health and safety barriers. Anyone else?

**Olivia Colon (DEEP):**

All right. So it looks like we have another comment from Edgar Encarnacion, which reads “my stand on WRF funding for major remediation issues that cannot be addressed by a weatherization contractor is that the issue needs to be addressed by specialized contractors in mold, asbestos, electrical, etc, that the funding needs to come with admin funding to manage the specialized contractors needed”.

**Seema Malani (DEEP):**

Thank you, Edgar.

Do you mind, you know, saying a little bit more about the admin funding needed to manage the specialized contractors?

**Olivia Colon (DEEP):**

And, Edgar, feel free to come off mute if it's easier to comment that way.

**Edgardo Encarnacion (CET):**

Sure. So if we have all these major remediation issues that cannot be addressed during a weatherization process and we have to send those to specialized contractors outside of WAP, then if funding is given to an agency to deal with these issues, the administration funding needs to come along with it just because there has to be a QA QC process to make sure that the remediation got done the right way, and we won't have any problems when it comes back to WAP.

The contractors are different so that with weatherization contractors some of them can do remediation. But from our experience here, small to medium remediation, when it comes to major ones like more than a certain amount of asbestos or mold or knob and tube, we need licensed contractors specialized in those fields. That has to be managed differently.

Even before it comes back to WAP, there has to be a QA QC on those jobs, and that takes admin funding to do that, to make sure that when it comes back to WAP, there's not any issues that are going to be sent back to remediation like we saw in the past.

**Seema Malani (DEEP):**

No, good point. Thank you, Edgar. Yes, we realize that and probably like a 3rd party testing to make sure that these barriers are remediated properly. Thank you.

**Olivia Colon (DEEP):**

We've got another question in the chat from Edgar saying “by the way, in CET, we have the data to back up the percentage of larger remediation jobs”. Which, if you would like to include that as part of your public comment, we would definitely welcome that.

**Edgardo Encarnacion (CET):**

Yes, I can forward this to DEEP at a later date, but we do have the data and the percentages. This will cover from March 23-24, all the way to this month of 25-26 program years. 24, I mean. 25-26 program year.

**Seema Malani (DEEP):**

Thank you. This would be super helpful.

**Seema Malani (DEEP):**

Hello, everyone! We have 5 more minutes of this public hearing, and if we do not hear any more public comments, we will close the comment period in 5 minutes.

And again, if anyone would like to submit feedback after today, written comments will be accepted through April 11<sup>th</sup> and the instructions are on the slide deck.

Thank you for everyone that participated. But we'll be here for another 5 min, and then we'll conclude.

**Seema Malani (DEEP):**

Thank you.

The meeting has now concluded. Thank you. Everyone