



CT's Low Income Energy Advisory Board Releases Policy Recommendations

The Office of Consumer Counsel (“OCC”) continues its active role on the state’s Low Income Energy Advisory Board (“LIEAB”) and currently serves as its Vice Chairperson. The LIEAB recently crafted several recommendations regarding energy affordability in Connecticut for policy makers to consider. A current and growing crisis, the energy affordability gap in the state is one that must be addressed. The LIEAB’s diverse membership does not necessarily agree on every recommendation made, but it agrees in whole that solutions need to be named around energy policy for low-income households in Connecticut.

The main message from the LIEAB is to set a goal that no more than 6% of low-income ratepayers’ income should be spent on energy. The path to achieving this goal includes suggestions like automatic energy assistance enrollment, the creation of rate designs that address past and current usage, incentivize low-income consumers who are active at conserving energy and allocating a portion of federal energy assistance funding to income-eligible households.

The LIEAB highlights the following key factors that need attention:

- Energy is a basic need. Although most would agree, the number of Connecticut residents unable to afford to pay for energy is significant, and growing.
- Low-income households in Connecticut cannot afford their energy bills. Even with assistance programs offered through the utilities, many vulnerable Connecticut families are still unable to afford energy costs.
- Low-income households suffer disproportionately. The overall energy burden is greatest on low-income households, mainly due to the fact that those customers are paying more out of their income on electricity than they can afford.
- Current policies and programs are inadequate. Connecticut has had assistance programs in place for years, and it’s become increasingly clear that there is room for improvement. Utility companies and other interested parties should make every effort to enhance these offerings so more customers can benefit from them.

- We are not better off by ignoring the problem of energy affordability. This problem is not going away. This problem is getting worse by the year, and real, actionable solutions are needed.
- Unaffordable bills harm energy utilities as well as customers. When customers cannot pay their electric bill, the utility ends up absorbing those costs as well as the expense of trying to collect those bills.
- New policies are needed. There are significant barriers that must be addressed. One example is that most of Connecticut's low-income customers are renters. Tenants don't have the right to repair or replace inefficient appliances or make any helpful improvements to their dwelling.

The time is now for these issues to take center stage in Connecticut. The OCC looks forward to focusing its efforts on issues specific to the energy affordability crisis in Connecticut and helping to close the gap.



Please visit [OCC's website](#).