



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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11 Feb 25

MEMORANDUM FOR: Government Oversight Committee, 132nd Maine Legislature,
Attn: Senator Craig D. Hickman, Senate Chair and Representative Anne-Marie
Mastraccio, House Chair, 82 State House Station, Room 104 Cross Building, Augusta,
Maine 04333-0082

SUBJECT: Investigative Request of the Operation and Audit of the Low Income Home
Energy Assistance Program

Senator Hickman and Representative Mastraccio and Fellow Members of the
Government Oversight Committee,

1. As referenced in my letter, dated 23 Jan 25, I am requesting that this committee vote to direct the Office of Program Evaluation and Government Accountability (OPEGA) to conduct an investigation into the management and operation and conduct an audit of the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP).
2. I am requesting that OPEGA collect and analyze a demographic breakdown of the number of benefit payouts/payout amounts by Community Action Program (CAP)/region and a demographic breakdown of the number of benefit payouts/payout amounts by fuel type to determine how many people are utilizing the program, from which Community Action Program they are being serviced and by fuel type.
3. I am further requesting that OPEGA collect and analyze enough information to create a detailed report of all funding sources (Federal, State and other) and a detailed report of all administrative and operational costs/expenditures for running the program to determine what percentage of funds allocated to the program are distributed to program recipients.
4. I am also requesting that OPEGA collect and analyze the number of requests for program assistance by CAP, the average time from request of service until appointment time by CAP, the average time from appointment until approval/disproval determination by CAP, and the average time of determination until receipt of benefit by CAP.
5. Furthermore, in an effort to understand the operations and operational needs of administering the the program, I ask that OPEGA be directed to determine how

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many personnel are employed and assigned directly by Maine State Housing directly to administer the LIHEAP program and how much is given to each CAP for administering the program.

6. The justifications for my requests are as follows :

7. I have been informed by multiple people that appointment times at the Community Action Programs, which have been tasked with performing the determination interviews, can be months after initial contact, even when the program recipient called the CAP less than a week after the program opened for applications. I have one constituent who has informed me that she called PenquisCAP in September of last year and her appointment is not set until March 25th of this year. I have heard similar complaints of long waits from several constituents in the past. I have also heard from the CAPs that this problem is exasperated by the fact that the state has reduced funding to the CAPS.

8. I had several constituents tell me that they were notified that they were called and notified that they were approved for assistance. However, even after approval they waited well over a month for any assistance to actually arrive, even though temperatures were below freezing.

9. Normally, when such concerns arise, I would act on behalf and in concert with my constituent and reach out to the appropriate state agency to help them get the information or assistance they need, such as when their benefit would arrive.

10. However, when I attempted to do this on behalf of one constituent who had already waited weeks after being told he was eligible for assistance, Maine Housing told me that they would not tell me when checks would be sent, only that it “was a process” and he would have to wait. They refused to explain to me what that process was, approximately how long the process usually took, or answer any of my numerous other basic questions.

11. Finally, I was informed that the costs of administering the LIHEAP program were in the neighborhood of 38% of the total expenditures for the program, a number that I have not been able to verify but a number that is concerning to me. If this number is correct, that would mean that \$14.25 million dollars of the federal LIHEAP funds were spent on administrative costs and not given to the Maine citizens that rely on them to stay warm.

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12. While I know this request is expansive, I am asking that OPEGA do this in a manner as minimally intrusive as possible while still achieving the goals outlined above.

13. I am hoping that by approving this request the committee can gain a better understanding of the policies and procedures at Maine State Housing in administering the Low Income Heating Assistance Program, identify any blatant deficiencies in the administration of the program and ensure that the resources utilized in the program are being properly and adequately utilized for the best interests of the citizens of the State of Maine.

14. I thank you for your time and will answer any questions to the best of my ability.

Respectfully,



Rep. Chad R. Perkins
District 31

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Sen. Jill Duson

Sen. Jeff Timberlake

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