



**Illinois  
Department of Commerce  
& Economic Opportunity**

Bruce Rauner, Governor

**Low Income Energy Assistance Policy Advisory Council  
Minutes of Phone Meeting Held on August 27, 2015  
10:00 a.m. – 11:00 a.m.**

**Attendance via Conference Telephone**

Members: *Deborah Bursey, Ameren; Joan Howard, Illinois Commerce Commission; Emily Monk, Department of Commerce & Economic Opportunity (DCEO); Jennifer Montague, Commonwealth Edison; Ellen Rendos, Nicor Gas; Dalitso Sulamoyo, Illinois Association of Community Action Agencies (IACAA); Chris Wheat, City of Chicago*

Guests: *Melanie Brown, Ameren; Mindy Browning, ERBA; Kimberly Burdine, ComEd; Allen Cherry, Attorney General's Office; Latoya Crowe, ComEd; Jen Fenske, Nicor Gas; Brian Glasgow, CEDA; Nancy Kane-Richards, Community Contacts; Michelle Machay, Peoples Gas; Shahi Nawab, CEDA; John Pady, CEDA; Shelby Montgomery, CEDA; Chuck Walls, ComEd; Kathy Walk, CEFS; Rhonda Williams, CEDA*

Staff: *Maria Gallardo, DCEO; John Hathaway, DCEO; Janet Hawes-Davis, DCEO; Patty Hughes, DCEO; Marie McLean, DCEO; Ben Moore, DCEO*

**Call to Order**

Emily Monk called the meeting to order.

**LIHEAP**

Emily Monk explained that the purpose of this meeting is to discuss the LIHEAP State Plan.

Maria Gallardo gave a summary of what was discussed at the public hearing on August 12, 2015, and additional feedback received after the hearing. There were nine participants in the hearing, eight in Chicago and one in Springfield. The main concern was the budget, suspension of the State LIHEAP funding and the impact on the low income community. There were three main suggestions. The first is to change our benefit matrix to give a different benefit to a household that owns the home as opposed to a household that is living in subsidized housing and is receiving a stipend. Due to limited time and resources, OEA is not going to change this for program year 2016. OEA needs to talk to the Illinois Housing Authority and see what stipends clients receive so OEA can discuss this option with the PAC at a later date. The second suggestion was to allow the LAAs the right to serve disconnected clients that are not part of the first priority group prior to November 1, 2015. Due to budget constraints and reconnection assistance (RA) needing to last until March 15, 2016, OEA is not going to give the LAAs the authority to provide RA until November 1, 2015, for the second priority group and the general population. However, seniors and disabled applicants who are disconnected can be served during their priority period. The third suggestion was to change RA from \$1,000 to \$750 and limit it to clients that would get their energy source reconnected. That has been added to the 2016 LIHEAP State Plan.

OEA received an email from the advocates with two concerns regarding disconnected clients. The first concern is the amount of processing time it takes for reconnection assistance (RA) if it isn't an emergency period. It can take from a week to two weeks at some LAAs. DCEO will provide guidance to the LAAs to minimize the number of days. The second concern was that some LAAs do not publicize the dates for accepting walk-in applicants, or have limited walk-in appointments, causing some clients to wait a week to two weeks for their applications to be taken. The advocates felt that these two issues should be addressed in the LIHEAP State Plan. OEA feels that these issues would be better addressed in the Energy Assistance Procedures Manual and will enforce policy, as needed.

Maria covered the proposed changes to the final draft of the LIHEAP State Plan. The dates have been changed throughout the plan to 2016. The priority period for seniors and disabled clients will start October 1, 2015, whether they are disconnected or not. On November 1, 2015, LAAs can start serving households with children under six and all clients that are disconnected or under imminent threat of disconnection. On December 1, 2015, LAAs can serve the general population. Furnace assistance will start October 1, 2015 for the seniors and disabled priority group. Furnace assistance will start November 1, 2015 for households with children under six and all clients that are disconnected or under imminent threat of disconnection. On December 1, 2015, furnace assistance will be offered to the general population. OEA is proposing that the furnace assistance be available through March 31, 2016, instead of April 30, 2016. The proposed change to the reconnection assistance (RA) benefit is to reduce the benefit from \$1,000 to \$750 and to provide the benefit only when the assistance will result in reconnection. The RA benefit will be offered to clients that are disconnected or under threat of eminent disconnect. The plan indicates that the Department doesn't plan to administer a cooling program in PY16 due to budget constraints. If funding becomes available and is allocated for this purpose, it will be brought to the PAC's attention, and the plan will be modified. The income guidelines have been updated to reflect the 2016 Federal Poverty Guidelines.

Dalitso Sulamoyo made a motion to approve the amended LIHEAP State Plan. Ellen Rendos seconded the motion. The motion carried.

### **New Business**

Ben Moore described what SB418, that was recently passed, meant for OEA. It was a bill that requested the technical language in the Energy Assistance Act be changed to clarify that carryover administrative money from a prior year can be used in subsequent years. Previously, the statute had been interpreted as restricting the 10% allowable administration funding for use in the year collected.

There was discussion about a need for a PIPP Steering Committee Meeting to discuss issues that were coming up immediately. It was decided that there would be a PIPP Steering Committee Phone Meeting on Monday, August 31, 2015.

### **Meeting Schedule**

The next meeting of the Policy Advisory Council will be communicated by email.

### **Adjournment**

Debora Bursey made a motion to adjourn. Ellen Rendos seconded. Motion carried.