



**Illinois  
Department of Commerce  
& Economic Opportunity**

JB Pritzker, Governor

**Low Income Energy Assistance Policy Advisory Council (PAC)  
Minutes of Meeting Held on Thursday, October 24, 2019  
10:00 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.**

**Attendance in Springfield and Chicago:**

*PAC Members:* Joan Howard, Illinois Commerce Commission; David Wortman, DCEO

*Guests:* Mindy Browning, ERBA; Mionia Booker, CEDA; Abigail Miner, Attorney General's Office; Shahi Nawab, CEDA; Michelle Pulce-Flynn, IACAA; Kimberly Roberts, CEDA; Kathy Walk, CEFS; Tyrone Pickens, CEDA

*DCEO Staff:* Angela Baldwin, Deirdre Coughlin, Maria Gallardo, Wayne Hartel, Leslie Ann Lesko, Ben Moore, Marie Mueller, Mick Prince

**Attendance via Conference Telephone:**

*PAC Members:* Elizabeth Berendsen, City of Chicago; Grace Brigando, Commonwealth Edison; Melanie Brown, Ameren IL; Aimee English, Citizen Utility Board; Wanda Hopkins, South Austin Coalition; Dalitso Sulamoyo, Champaign County

*Guests:* Jennifer Marten, Nicor Gas; Shelby Montgomery, CEDA; Lauren Pashayan, Land of Lincoln Legal Assistance; Barbara Richardson, Legal Aid Chicago; Aarian Smith, ComEd; Martha Strawser, Rockford Human Services

**Call to Order**

David Wortman called the meeting to order.

**Approval of PAC Minutes**

There were no corrections from the July 25, 2019 minutes. A vote to approve the minutes was moved by Dalitso Sulamoyo and seconded by Joan Howard. The motion carried. The minutes were approved.

**Fiscal**

Ben Moore provided the fiscal report. He referenced the Program Status report that was distributed to the attendees. He said the Weatherization program has about \$39.8 million available in funds out in the network. The grantees have utilized about \$8 million to date. There is about \$31.8 million available. Two of the grants were carry-over grants from the Program Year 2019. The State and HHS grants from that year were available for July, August and September 2019 and they still have funds available. The final

closeout isn't due until the middle of November. He said they are in the process of reviewing the remaining funding from DOE's last year program which they are in their year with a grant from them. Any money that is not spent, will have to be sent back. Fiscal is discussing ways to get the money out to the network.

Ben indicated that LIHEAP has about \$214.8 million out in the network for this Program Year 2020. He said about \$42.2 million has been expended with about \$172.7 million still available. OCA has not received the 2020 HHS award yet as it has been delayed. All grants are ready, awaiting the award to distribute.

### **Weatherization**

Mick Prince provided the Weatherization report. He stated a total of 962 units have been completed so far. The network shows it can meet production goals. They are working continuously with the Central Management Services (CMS) to hire employees for this program as well as Procurement for the new Weatherworks system. Mick said most of the LAA's procurement should be completed and is aware of a few with issues. He thanked Ben and his staff for getting the grants to the LAAs.

David Wortman asked if last year's goal was the same. Mick said a little higher but was hard to project because of the Weatherization utility funding. It started with all the money infused with grant dollars. Since then, especially in the northern region, their focus in doing utility only projects which makes it hard to look at the utility budget to see what is grant funded. David reiterated that is has blended funding and not utility only projects.

### **LIHEAP**

Leslie Ann Lesko provided the LIHEAP report. The State Plan was submitted to HHS on 8/28 and the document can be found on the LIHEAP website. Leslie Ann thanked everyone for their input, The 2020 LIHEAP State Plan was previously approved by the PAC during the July meeting. We also sent the group the direct link where the document is posted on the LIHEAP website.

The heating season began October 1<sup>st</sup> and the program is now available for seniors and disabled applicants. The program opens on November 1<sup>st</sup> for families with children under 6 and disconnected households. The program is available to all other low-income households starting December 1<sup>st</sup>.

A total of \$8,131,079 is being spent on behalf of 18,543 customers receiving LIHEAP benefits. See breakdown by LAA in the Program Status report. The application entry count has taken a total of 50,365 applications between October 1 -21, 2019 which is 238 more applications than the prior year during the same time period.

It is that time of the year again where we start working with the regulated utilities and propane vendors to collect data for our LIHEAP Performance Measures. This report is due to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) by January 31, 2020. The files have already been sent to each utility and propane vendors, so they can provide us with the annual bill and annual usage data for these LIHEAP customers. Leslie Ann thanked the utilities for their continuous partnership and collaboration in this important report.

Leslie Ann discussed the LIHEAP.net support. She said the Department has been having some challenges in the past reaching out the right person at the DoIT- Data Center that can help us when LIHEAP.net is down. There have been special meetings regarding the system. Our IT staff has been working closer with DoIT-Data Center to make sure LIHEAP.net is treated as a critical database system due to the nature of our program. They are increasing the monitoring of our servers.

### **PIPP**

Maria Gallardo provided the PIPP report. She stated the LAAs have been recertifying the bulk of PIPP customers since July 1. She reported that a total of \$22,378,985 is annually obligated on behalf of 21,125 customers that are receiving PIPP benefits. The average statewide benefit is \$1,059 compared to last year's average of \$1,049.

As for Program Year 2020, new PIPP applications started on October 1, and the Department is allocating a total of \$40 million for PIPP. However, we have an additional \$10 million that we have identified that can provide additional funding for LAAs that prove they have a need to serve additional PIPP customers.

One of the goals this year is to also allow the general population (December) to apply for PIPP. OCA has been working with the LAAs and based on funding availability, some LAAs will offer PIPP starting in October, some LAAs will offer PIPP each month until available funding by county, by utility and priority group is met, and some others will offer PIPP starting in November or December. OCA asked the LAAs to submit a PIPP new enrollment plan and all the LAAs will be offering PIPP to new customers.

Maria reported that the Department posted a new Invitation for Bid (IFB) for the STARS-PIPP IT Support and Kestner Consulting was the selected vendor. The new contract started in October.

We had a PIPP Steering Committee meeting on October 10. The main take away was that the Department will dedicate the April PIPP Steering Committee meeting for the discussion of the proposed policy change that have to do with "limiting the duration of a PIPP customer enrollment". The Department will be reviewing data, so we can present data to the group and further discussion. This proposed change was introduced as a response to funding availability and some LAAs not being able to offer PIPP to other low-income households (outside of the priority groups).

Wanda Hopkins stated she disagrees with "limiting the duration of a PIPP customer enrollment" and wants more people to have the right to apply for PIPP. She suggests allocating money to CEDA to allow them to have a whole PIPP program where people can have more access to PIPP.

Maria said OCA is working with CEDA to expand more when they can and to remember most of the customers come from Peoples Gas and ComEd households, which funding is limited in the Peoples Gas service area. We are currently discussing with CEDA how they can expand more. Wanda explained how she feels with working in this program for 30 years with customers paying \$76 for gas and \$55 for lights.

David Wortman reiterated that there is no proposal on the table at this point. He also mentioned that OCA is going to analyze data which will be presented at the April PIPP Steering Committee meeting. He said the goal is to have it distributed before the meeting to have everyone look it over and be ready to discuss it at the meeting.

Melanie Brown asked if there were complaints about the PIPP enrollments. Mindy Browning said she has had some challenges, but she really wants the December population to have access to the program because in her area this population has never had it before.

Kathy Walk said they haven't had any problems.

### **Other Business**

Kathy asked Maria about the Kestner PIPP-IT contract. If there is a timeframe for them to enhance the enrollment letters. Maria stated the new enrollment and denial letters are currently in the priority list.

It was announced that Kathy was awarded for their outstanding work with Ameren. They partnered with CUB and won third place.

Maria discussed the renewal of the PAC members that will be expiring December 2019. OCA will be contacting everyone soon to begin the process.

### **Meeting Schedule**

The meeting schedule will be sent in December. David asked if the meetings should be changed to Wednesdays at 10:00 a.m. or Thursdays at 1:30 p.m. Since there was no selection, one will be chosen. It will still be quarterly. David requested members to email OCA and let us know if they have a preferred date. The annual meeting schedule will be announced in December and OCA will notify the group.

### **Adjournment**

The meeting was adjourned.