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**S. 959, An Act providing for energy assistance during the summer months –  
Joint Committee on Housing –  
SUPPORT**

194th General Court of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts

Testimony of Jenifer Bosco, Senior Attorney  
National Consumer Law Center  
July 23, 2025

Dear Chair Richard Haggerty, Chair Julian Cyr, and Members of the Joint Committee on Housing:

Thank you for the opportunity to submit written testimony in support of *S. 959, An Act providing for energy assistance during the summer months*.

My name is Jenifer Bosco, and I am the Managing Director of Energy Advocacy at the National Consumer Law Center (NCLC) where I lead NCLC's work on energy and utility matters that affect consumers. NCLC is a nonprofit organization that, since 1969, has used its expertise in consumer law and energy policy to work for consumer justice and economic security for low-income and other disadvantaged people.

For many years, NCLC has been actively involved in advocacy for low-income Massachusetts utility consumers. We have represented low-income consumers and helped to implement utility protections in Massachusetts including discount utility rates, winter disconnection protections, serious illness protections, and others. As summers become warmer and extreme heat events become more common, we recognize that low-income Massachusetts residents need additional protections from utility disconnection and support for affordable utility service during hot summer months and extreme heat events. These protections have become necessary to protect health and safety.

In recent years, Americans have suffered through more frequent and dangerous heat waves across the country, which can lead to serious harm to health and safety and even death.<sup>1</sup> Nearly a

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<sup>1</sup> Kaiser Family Foundation, *Continued Rises in Extreme Heat and Implications for Health Disparities*, N. Ndugga, S. Artiga, August 24, 2023; see <https://www.kff.org/racial-equity-and-health-policy/issue-brief/continued-rises-in-extreme-heat-and-implications-for-health-disparities>

quarter of people in the U.S. are vulnerable to extreme heat. Low-income households are more at risk for the harmful consequences of climate-related extreme heat.<sup>2</sup> NCLC has issued a report which details the problem and the need for extreme heat protections, with more information about the impacts of extreme heat and utility affordability on low-income consumers.<sup>3</sup>

NCLC supports S. 959, which would create a program of summer cooling assistance for vulnerable people, to be funded through this General Court's budget allocations. Cooling assistance is an essential protection, along with protections from utility disconnections during extreme heat events, to keep vulnerable households safe in the summer heat.

We urge the General Court to take notice of the following issues, in order to provide strong protections for low-income families:

- As stated in the legislation, funding for this program would come entirely from Massachusetts budget allocations. It is crucial to provide additional funding for summer cooling, and to ensure that the summer cooling program will not use federal funding that supports winter heating assistance through the Low Income Home Energy Affordability Program (LIHEAP, or HEAP). Federal LIHEAP funding for heating assistance is crucial for low-income families in Massachusetts, and this heating assistance must not be diverted.
- Community Action Agencies, which have for decades administered the HEAP program in Massachusetts, are vital participants to be included in any discussions about developing and implementing a summer cooling program.
- S. 959 allows for 10% of state-allocated cooling funds to be used for administrative support to enable the programs to operate. Adequate administrative funding is essential so that the Community Action Agencies can establish and run any summer cooling program.
- As S. 959 states, and to help minimize administrative burden, eligibility should mirror HEAP eligibility requirements, and the program should be administered by the same Community Action Agency network, to minimize administrative burdens and to allow for an efficient program.

The bill would protect low-income consumers by making it more affordable to use home cooling equipment during the months when extreme heat is most expected to strike. The bill also helps to address ongoing energy affordability challenges, which can be worsened by extreme heat events.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> See, e.g., Michelle Graff et al., [Climate Change and Energy Insecurity: A Growing Need for Policy Intervention](#), Environmental Justice, Vol. 15, No. 2, 76-82 (April 19, 2022), available at <https://par.nsf.gov/servlets/purl/10248736>.

<sup>3</sup> Karen Lusson, NCLC, *Protecting Access to Essential Utility Service During Extreme Heat and Climate Change* (July 2024), <https://www.nclc.org/resources/protecting-access-to-essential-utility-service/>

<sup>4</sup> See, e.g., Barreca, A., Park, R.J. & Stainier, P., *High temperatures and electricity disconnections for low-income homes in California*, Nat Energy 7, 1052–1064 (2022). <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41560-022-01134-2>, (“The results

In conclusion, NCLC supports S. 959. The bill is a common-sense approach to protect low-income consumers during extreme heat events, and to protect public health and safety in the Commonwealth.

If you have questions regarding this testimony, please contact Jenifer Bosco, National Consumer Law Center, at [jbosco@nclc.org](mailto:jbosco@nclc.org) or 617-542-8010.

Sincerely,

Jenifer Bosco  
Managing Director of Energy Advocacy  
National Consumer Law Center

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from this study show that hot weather causes financial strain on low-income households, as evidenced by an increase in electricity expenses and subsequent electricity disconnections.”).