

**Testimony of the National Consumer Law Center, on behalf of its Low-Income Clients
Before the House Appropriations Committee
Subcommittee on Energy and Water Development and Related Agencies**

FY 2027 Appropriations for the Department of Energy's Weatherization Program

Prepared by Olivia Wein, Senior Attorney, National Consumer Law Center¹

(owein@nclc.org)

April 17, 2026

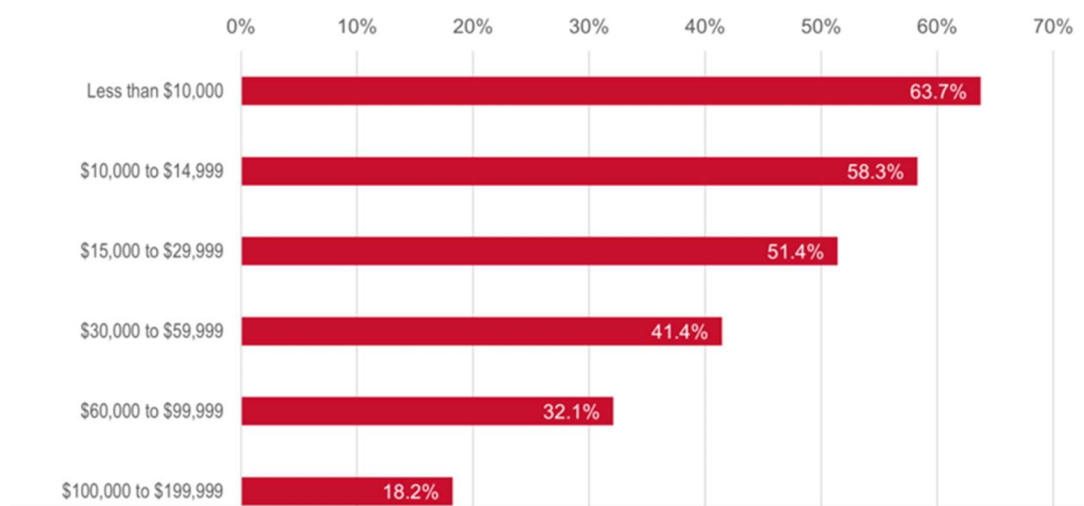
Chairman Fleischmann, Ranking Member Kaptur and members of the Subcommittee, we respectfully write to thank you and to request your continued support for the **U.S. Department of Energy's (DOE's) Weatherization Assistance Program (WAP) (\$375 million), Training & Technical Assistance (\$15 million) and the Weatherization Readiness Fund (\$52 million)**. For nearly 50 years, years the Weatherization program has helped seniors, veterans, individuals with disabilities and other income-qualified households save money on their energy bills. These critical DOE programs also strengthen local economies by growing a skilled contractor workforce and supporting small businesses.

Rising energy bills are straining the budgets of everyday people. New data from DOE's Energy Information Agency Residential Energy Consumption Survey (RECs) show that one-in-three households (33%) are experiencing "energy insecurity". Energy insecurity means the household has sacrificed another basic necessity to pay the energy bill; kept the home at unsafe temperatures; received a disconnection notice, or has been unable to heat or cool their home. Energy insecurity is disproportionately concentrated among households of color, particularly Black (55%) and Native American households (56.6%) versus the US total rate (32.9%). As

¹ Since 1969, the nonprofit [National Consumer Law Center® \(NCLC®\)](https://www.nclc.org/) has worked for consumer justice and economic security for low-income and other disadvantaged people in the U.S. through its expertise in policy analysis and advocacy, publications, litigation, expert witness services, and training.

shown in the table below there the lower the income, the higher the rate of energy insecurity with over half of households with incomes below \$29,000 experiencing energy insecurity.²

Percentage of U.S. Households Reporting Any Household Energy Insecurity by Annual Household Income



Source: John Howat, National Consumer Law Center, “Energy Insecurity on the Rise: Preliminary Findings from the 2024 Residential Energy Consumption Survey,” (March 2026).

Low-income households spend on average 9.1% of their income on energy costs, almost 3.8 times more than non-low-income households (2.4%).³ Home energy is also more expensive during prolonged periods of extreme temperatures because households use more fuel to keep the home at safe temperatures. Prolonged colder than normal temperatures, such as the sharp cold wave that resulted in 22 deaths and affected a wide swath of the country January to March 2019⁴, can result in an unexpected, increased use of heating fuels. Likewise, prolonged hot

² John Howat, National Consumer Law Center, “Energy Insecurity on the Rise: Preliminary Findings from the 2024 Residential Energy Consumption Survey,” (March 2026). https://www.nclc.org/wp-content/uploads/2026/03/202603_Issue-Brief_Energy-Insecurity-on-the-Rise_-_Preliminary-Findings-from-the-2024-Residential-Energy-Consumption-Survey.pdf.

³ National Energy Assistance Directors Association, “Energy Hardship Report” (February 2026) at p.4. <https://neada.org/energy-affordability-project/>.

⁴ See e.g., “Extreme cold in the Midwest led to high power demand and record natural gas demand,” US Energy Information Administration, Today in Energy (Feb. 26, 2019). <https://www.eia.gov/todayinenergy/detail.php?id=38472>.

temperatures, which are becoming more common, can result in an increased need for air conditioning, particularly for consumers with certain medical conditions.⁵ A robust WAP helps keep homes at safe temperatures and thus protects the health and safety of the household.

WAP services 35,000 homes on average annually making the homes more efficient so they use less energy and this helps struggling households by lowering household energy bills by \$372 or more on average. Since WAP began in 1976, over 7 million homes have been weatherized.⁶ WAP is extremely cost effective with each \$1 of WAP producing over \$4 of benefits.⁷

Sometimes the poor condition of a home results in a WAP deferral. Some of the common deferral reasons include serious problems with the building envelope (e.g., leaky roof), old electrical panel and/or wiring that is expensive to replace, and plumbing leaks.⁸ These are structural problems with the home that require repair before WAP work can be done. The Weatherization Readiness Fund is able to address these repair issues to make the home weatherization ready and get more homes serviced by WAP.

⁵ Lynne Page Snyder and Christopher Baker, *Affordable Home Energy and Health: Making the Connections*, AARP Public Policy Institute (June 2010) at pp.10-11. https://neada.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/02/aarp_neada_report_affordable_home_energy_and_health_june_2010.pdf. See also, Karen Lusson, “Protecting Access to Essential Utility Service During Extreme Heat and Climate Change”. <https://www.nclc.org/resources/protecting-access-to-essential-utility-service/>.

⁶ U.S. Department of Energy, Weatherization Assistance Program. <https://www.energy.gov/cmei/scep/wap/weatherization-assistance-program>.

⁷ Jason Reott, Alliance to Save Energy, “Weatherization Works: The Case for Protecting America’s Largest Residential Efficiency Program” (Sept. 15, 2025). <https://www.ase.org/blog/weatherization-works-case-protecting-americas-largest-residential-efficiency-program>.

⁸ Dan Farrell, Jasmine Mah, Reuven Sussman, and Mike Specian. 2025. *Estimating the Impacts of Weatherization Readiness Programs*. Washington, DC: American Council for an Energy-Efficient Economy, at page vii. www.aceee.org/research-report/b2504.

WAP T&TA helps grow a skilled contractor workforce. WAP programs require a range of skill sets from auditors, installers, crew chiefs, quality control inspectors, trainers, to staff trained to handle eligibility determinations and program managers. WAP provides a comprehensive approach to weatherizing homes that relies on cost-effective measures that are inspected for quality and completeness.⁹ The T&TA funds are critical to maintain this high level of program delivery.

The DOE Weatherization program is a cost-effective program that provides a long-term relief for families struggling with unaffordable energy bills. In addition to lowering household energy bills, WAP enhances comfort and safety while also promoting a trained contractor workforce. **For these reasons, we respectfully request your continued support for the U.S. Department of Energy's (DOE's) Weatherization Assistance Program (WAP) (\$375 million), WAP Training & Technical Assistance (\$15 million) and the Weatherization Readiness Fund (\$52 million), and we urge you to ensure that there is sufficient staffing at DOE to administer the WAP program.**

⁹ DOE, "National Weatherization Training and Technical Assistance Plan, Weatherization Assistance Program" (Dec. 3, 2009) at 3.
https://www1.eere.energy.gov/wip/pdfs/wap_tta_plan.pdf.