

SB 1124 Will Harm Low-Income Heating Customers, Silence Advocates, and Only Benefit Special Interests

SB 1124 is a combination of well-intentioned but unnecessary restatements of existing laws and special provisions for special interest groups – energy companies that deliver fuel and public utilities. An analysis of the bill and why it should not pass in its current form follows.

- **SB 1124 prevents Pennsylvania from obtaining fair energy prices to control costs.** Pennsylvania makes its LIHEAP dollars go further by using its purchasing power to get a better deal on fuel oil for LIHEAP recipients. This bill would prohibit Pennsylvania from obtaining reduced energy prices for LIHEAP recipients. States like New York, Massachusetts, Connecticut, and Maryland have been able to offer discounted fuel oil prices through the LIHEAP program.
- **SB 1124 gives extra LIHEAP dollars to utilities and takes funds away from people who are actually without heat or who are about to lose heat.** Pennsylvania should allow households facing *imminent* termination to qualify for crisis grants. SB 1124 allows utilities to get crisis grants by *threatening* to turn off service during the winter moratorium, when utility service terminations are illegal. Allowing utilities to receive payment for empty threats depletes limited LIHEAP funds, leaving fewer funds for those who face real crises.
- **SB 1124 dilutes the voices of consumers on the LIHEAP Advisory Committee (LAC) by giving an unprecedented amount of power to energy vendors.** Pennsylvania has a well-functioning advisory committee that represents all stakeholders. SB 1124 mandates that energy and utility executives chair the LAC on a rotating basis. LIHEAP is a program meant to help low-income people to afford heat, not to cater to special interest groups.
- **SB 1124 increases red tape and undoes modernization.** Currently, if a LIHEAP applicant's income documentation is already on file, duplicate paperwork is not required. Requiring excess documentation only makes the program less efficient and does not prevent abuse.
- **SB 1124 does not add to consumer protections.** While some provisions appear pro-consumer, they merely repeat existing law. Federal law, state regulations, and/or the LIHEAP State Plan already set forth income ceilings, promptness standards, protections for the disabled, and requirements to enroll customers in customer assistance programs. None of these provisions justify passing a bad bill.

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