

STATE OF NEW HAMPSHIRE

COMMISSIONER
Jared S. Chicoine

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER
Christopher J. Ellms, Jr.



DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY
21 S. Fruit St., Suite 10
Concord, N.H. 03301-2429

TDD Access: Relay NH
1-800-735-2964

Tel. (603) 271-3670

FAX No. 271-1526

Website:
www.energy.nh.gov

April 27, 2023

The Honorable Dan Innis, Chairman
Senate Capital Budget Committee
State House
107 N. State Street
Concord, NH 03301

Dear Senator Innis and members of the Committee,

The Department of Energy's (NH DOE) sole request in the Capital Budget (HB 25) is to replace the software system that manages the Fuel Assistance Program (FAP) and Weatherization Assistance Program (WAP). This request is to extend the lapse of an existing authorization of \$316,000 and for an additional appropriation of \$568,000. Both are 100% federal funds. HB 25 as amended by the House include both the lapse extension and additional appropriation.

The software system in question serves as the backbone of FAP and WAP, managing everything in the respective programs from income screening, client information, benefit determination, award letter creation, payments, and federal reporting requirements. While enrollments fluctuate from year to year, FAP averages roughly 24,000 households per year and WAP roughly 300 households per year.

The existing software system is more than twenty years old, increasingly fragile, and is no longer meeting the needs of the programs, especially with ever increasing federal reporting requirements for FAP and WAP. Routine data requests needed to complete federal reports often take days to complete. A failure of this software system would make it nearly impossible to process assistance applications and pay out benefits to clients.

In addition, the Legislative Budget Assistant, Audit Division recently completed a performance audit of the Weatherization Assistance Program that recommends a software system be put in place to manage this program. Observation #1 recommends "...Energy work with the Department of Information Technology to identify the requirements of an information system that will better support the WAP and develop or purchase a system that will meet these unique requirements." This capital budget request will allow us to do just that.

A new software system would allow for greater efficiencies in staff time, for the Community Action Agencies and NH DOE, leading to better and quicker service to the people of the state of New Hampshire. It also will allow NH DOE to manage the programs more effectively by having greater and more frequent access to data and program metrics.

Respectfully Submitted,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Jared Chicoine".

Jared Chicoine
Commissioner