

Massaro, Luly (PUC)

From: Weedon, Deirdre (DHS)
Sent: Thursday, December 12, 2019 4:06 PM
To: Massaro, Luly (PUC)
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Subject: Revision to RI DHS Response to First Set of Data Requests
Attachments: DHS-NGrid 4290 ServiceList.doc; 2020 First set DRs to DHS - response revised 121219.pdf; Enhancement Fund Calculations PUC 1-2 and 1-3 DR update on 12 12 19.xlsx

Dear Ms. Massaro:

Attached is the revision of the DHS response to the PUC's first set of data requests. There are two revisions in the document: PUC 1-2 letter c and PUC 1-3 letter c. The attached spreadsheet has also been updated. At the time that DHS responded to the Commission's first set of data requests, we did not have the actual balances. In this revision, we adjusted our projections using the actual balance as of August 2019. Please note that although the credits to the LIHEAP Enhancement Fund are fairly steady month to month, the debits would never in practice be evenly distributed as is shown in our spreadsheet, but for purposes of projection, they mirror the total annual outlay in order to ensure that we would have sufficient funds for the year. The calculations show that we do.

Thank you,

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STATE OF RHODE ISLAND AND PROVIDENCE PLANTATIONS
PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION

IN RE: DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES :
PROPOSED LIHEAP ENHANCEMENT : DOCKET 4290
CHARGE FOR CALENDAR YEAR 2020

COMMISSION'S FIRST SET OF DATA REQUESTS ISSUED TO DHS

(Issued October 10, 2019)
Please respond by October 31, 2019

PUC 1-1

R.I. Gen Laws § 39-1-27.12(c)(3) provides: "A minimum of five percent (5%) shall be allocated to provide assistance to customers who are seeking LIHEAP certification for the sole purpose of entering into an arrearage plan as defined in § 39-2-1(d)(2) between April 15 and September 30 of each year. Such customers must be a homeless family or individual transitioning from a shelter into housing and who have provided documentation acceptable to the department of human services. Any funds remaining at the end of the fiscal year shall be available for the upcoming winter season."

Please provide documentation as to:

- a) The amount allocated to assist customers who were seeking LIHEAP certification for the sole purpose of entering into an arrearage plan between April 15 and September 30.
- b) The amount of funding granted to this subset of customers.
- c) The amount of funding carried over that will be available for this subset of customers for the upcoming winter season.

RI Department of Human Services Responses to Data Request:

- a) \$375,000 (5% of \$7,500,000)
- b) \$7,684.28 (April 15-September 30, 2019)
- c) 367,315.72 (\$375,000 – \$7,684.28)

PUC 1-2

Please identify the anticipated amounts to be issued in the 2020 year for the following:

RI Department of Human Services Responses to Data Request:

- a) Primary grants \$17,382,805 (FFY2020)
- b) Crisis grants \$2,1484.38 (FFY2020)
- c) LIHEAP Enhancement Funds (see attached spreadsheet) \$10,705,851 (FFY2020)

PUC 1-3

In the 2019 proceedings, the Division opined that the planned combined outreach efforts of DHS and National Grid should increase participation in the LIHEAP Enhancement program. In the 2019 proceedings in this Docket, DHS estimated/anticipated that the fund balance would be approximately \$3.0 million by September 2019. According to the report filed by National Grid on September 18, 2019, the fund balance as of August 2019 was \$4,855,631.

- a) Please describe, in detail, what combined outreach efforts, if any, took place during the 2018-2019 hearing season.
- b) Please describe, in detail, what combined outreach efforts, if any, are planned for the 2019-2020 heating season.
- c) Please explain why the balance at August 2019 of \$4.9 million is roughly 63% higher than the original September 2019 anticipated balance of \$3.0 million.

RI Department of Human Services Responses to Data Request:

- a) CAP agencies participated in National Grid Expos. Starting in February 2019, Consumer Advocates from National Grid had regularly scheduled days throughout the week to visit all of CAP agencies to assist LIHEAP clients with payment plans. Their set schedules were promoted by the CAP agencies. CAP agencies participated in various outreach events and activities in their communities.
- b) Below is a list of outreach work planned for the 2019-2020, much of it is underway.
 - (1) CAP agency LIHEAP staff will continue to participate in National Grid Expos.
 - (2) National Grid Consumer Advocates will continue to have regularly scheduled days throughout the week to visit CAP agencies to assist LIHEAP clients with payment plans. Their set schedules will be promoted by the CAP agencies through social media, phone calls, posters, and in their outreach work.
 - (3) National Grid will print a message on the back of the bill envelopes that go to customers (December 2019, January 2020, and February 2020) indicating how to learn about energy assistance.
 - (4) DHS created LIHEAP flyers in English/Spanish, English/Portuguese, and English/Cambodian (see attached). These will be distributed to the CAP agencies and used directly by DHS for outreach.
 - (5) DHS distributed flyers to all the public libraries in Rhode Island. Discussions of outreach events at some libraries have been initiated.
 - (6) DHS distributed flyers to the Meals on Wheels organization. Each Meals on Wheels recipient in Rhode Island will receive a LIHEAP flyer.
 - (7) DHS is working with the RI Food Bank to get the LIHEAP flyers to the food pantry members.
 - (8) DHS is distributing flyers directly to busy food pantries in the state.
 - (9) DHS is distributing flyers to many community agencies throughout the state.
 - (10) DHS will outreach to the public schools in Rhode Island to share the flyers with parents and grandparents.

- (11) DHS will outreach to the Housing Authorities and other low-income housing developments in cities and towns throughout Rhode Island.
- (12) DHS will continue to work collaboratively with each CAP agency to assist them with their outreach plans.

c) The amount of LIHEAP Enhancement Funds grants awarded to customers was set too conservatively last year, even though the Department of Human Services increased it from \$250 to \$370 per customer. For the calendar year 2020, the Department of Human Services has increased the award from \$370 to \$520. Although predictions cannot be precise due to the unknown factors of temperature and demand through the winter, the department calculates that this increase in the grant amount will result in a Fund balance of about \$1.2 million as of September 2020. See attached spreadsheet.

PUC 1-4

In PUC 1-2 in 2019, DHS indicated that it would work with National Grid to determine the average household discounts under Docket 4770 so that they would be more precisely factored into the aware of LIHEAP federal grants and LIHEAP federal enhancement awards.

Please describe, in detail, the efforts undertaken by DHS to work with National Grid over the past year to determine the average household discounts under Docket 4770 and how this has impacted DHS's determination of award amounts for the upcoming LIHEAP year.

RI Department of Human Services Responses to Data Request:

The National Grid discounts were revised significantly on September 1, 2018 and so have been in place for just one year. DHS needs to study data going into this heating season to see if there is an increase in the number of customers with credit balances on their National Grid accounts. This would indicate that a lower federal grant would be justified.

PUC 1-5

Please update the LIHEAP Grants chart contained in PUC 1-2 from the 2019 LIHEAP grant year.

RI Department of Human Services Responses to Data Request:



RHODE ISLAND DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES

**LIHEAP Grant Amounts
Federal Fiscal Year 2020
Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP)**

LIHEAP GRANTS					
	<u>Poverty Level and Heating Category</u>	<u>Heating Source</u>			
		<u>Deliverables</u>	<u>N/GAS</u>	<u>Electric</u>	<u>Other</u>
A	Up to 75% Federal Poverty Level (FPL)	\$1,354	\$370	\$655	
B	76-100%	\$1,221	\$320	\$566	
C	101-125%	\$1,192	\$270	\$477	
D	126-150%	\$1,183	\$250	\$422	
E	151% +	\$1,154	\$220	\$389	
F	Sec. 8 w/ Primary Heating Bill	\$500	\$205	\$310	
G	HIR (Direct payment to household)				\$190
H	HIR (Secondary Electric)				\$125
I	Section 8 HIR (own electric)				\$75

These grant amounts are valid from October 1, 2019 through September 30, 2020

PUC 1-6

Utilizing the LIHEAP Grants chart contained in PUC 1-2 from last year, please provide a breakdown of the grants made under each category of the chart.

Poverty Level and Heating Category	Heating Source							
	Deliverables	Grants	N/GAS	Grants	Electric	Grants	Other	Grants
Up to 75% Federal Poverty Level	\$1,000	823	\$520	2,237	\$635	200		
76-100%	\$950	1,128	\$470	2,812	\$575	231		
101-125%	\$900	1,346	\$420	2,470	\$510	232		
126-150%	\$830	1,436	\$390	2,275	\$475	208		
151% +	\$820	3,231	\$370	4,621	\$450	449		
Sec. 8 w/ Primary Heating Bill	\$500	281	\$205	3,175	\$310	541		
Heat In Rent (Direct payment to household)							\$190	55
Heat In Rent (Secondary Electric)							\$125	405
Section 8 Heat In Rent (own electric)							\$75	1,321