

Hello Chairman Horn, Vice Chairman Shirkey, and members of the House Energy and Technology Committee. Thank you for allowing me to address you. My name is Susan Sherer and I am the CEO of The Heat and Warmth Fund, THAW, a statewide independent non-profit agency that provides low-income individuals and families with emergency energy assistance and advocates for long-term energy solutions. THAW was founded in 1985 as a resource of last resort to help Michigan individuals and families struggling to afford home heating and electricity costs vital to their health and safety.

Since 2002, THAW has served as a responsible and effective distributor of LIEEF funds; activating \$48 million in LIEEF grants to deliver over \$60 million in direct assistance to more than 50,000 Michigan residents facing difficulty affording their home energy costs.

I came to THAW in March of 2010. In this past year, THAW activated a \$6.3 Million LIEE grant to deliver \$8.1 Million in direct assistance to over 8,000 (8,226) households across the state. In addition to delivering this assistance via 103 agency sites in 62 counties, THAW delivered funds in a number of new configurations aimed at increasing administrative efficiency and achieving long-term solutions for the recipient. This included a mobile processing initiative where we provided on-site assistance at community events as well as participation in a number of pilot programs testing the ability of a

low-income rate coupled with wraparound services such as home weatherization and energy-education to reduce consumption and improve customer payment activity.

We were prepared to deliver \$11.4 million granted to us as part of the \$62 million Low Income Energy Assistance Grants issued by the Michigan Public Service Commission on June 28 of this year in advance of the July 21 court ruling outlawing the Fund.

THAW is eager to continue down the path of innovation towards long-term energy solutions and in this regard, we are actively participating on Senator Caswell's Energy Assistance Workgroup to evaluate and improve the way we deliver energy assistance in Michigan.

While we are confident that effort will lead to solutions down the road, we cannot overlook the immediate threat of harm and human suffering that we face if we do not address the needs of Michigan's most vulnerable households this heating season. What we know is that helping a home maintain utility services avoids a host of ancillary negative impacts when service is discontinued such as removal of children from the home due to unsafe living conditions, and the inability to safely store medicines such as insulin or operate medical devices such as respiratory assist devices. In the most extreme cases, this assistance prevents serious illnesses, hypothermia and even death

that can result from absence of heat in the home or through the use of unsafe heating practices.

Temperatures have already begun to drop; I urge you to take up this issue with a sense of immediacy and conviction that THAW, along with the other agencies granted the funds in question, stand ready to deliver this assistance.

Thank you for your time and your attention to this crucial issue.