



# HOUSE of REPRESENTATIVES

## STATE OF MICHIGAN

### Appropriations Requests for Legislatively Directed Spending Items

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1. The sponsoring representative's first name:  
Karen
2. The sponsoring representative's last name:  
Whitsett
3. The cosponsoring representatives' names. All cosponsors must be listed. If none, please type 'n/a.' A signed letter from the sponsor approving the co-sponsorship and a signed letter from the member wishing to co-sponsor are required. Attach letters at question #9 below.  
N/A
4. Name of the entity that the spending item is intended for:  
THAW (The Heat and Warmth Fund)
5. Physical address of the entity that the spending item is intended for:  
535 Griswold Suite #200, Detroit, MI 48226
6. If there is not a specific recipient, the intended location of the project or activity:  
Statewide – This grant will serve Michigan residents in all 83 counties
7. Name of the representative and the district number where the legislatively directed spending item is located:  
Statewide
8. Purpose of the legislatively directed spending item. Please include how it provides a public benefit and why it is an appropriate use of taxpayer funding. Please also demonstrate that the item does not violate Article IV, S 30 of the Michigan Constitution. THAW requests \$3,000,000 to provide utility assistance for residents in need across the state of Michigan. THAW is an exempt 501 (c) (3) agency. THAW has demonstrated the ability to provide direct assistance, distributing nearly \$216 million in utility assistance to 300,000 vulnerable Michigan households since 1985.  
I. Describe Need  
According to the U.S. Department of Energy, low-income households face an energy burden (the total household income spent on energy) up to three times higher than other

households. This increased energy burden makes housing costs unmanageable for many and puts families at risk. THAW assistance to Michigan residents eliminates difficult choices between paying heat and electricity or food and medication, thereby helping residents reallocate resources to high high-priority needs, focusing on a mortgage or rent payments, groceries, school supplies, or transportation to and from school or work. In Michigan, this burden directly affects our ALICE population daily (Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed) — households that earn above the Federal Poverty Level (FPL) but cannot afford the basic cost of living in their county. Despite struggling to make ends meet, ALICE households often do not qualify for public assistance. The United for ALICE research center of Michigan indicates that out of Michigan's 4,056,422 households in 2022, 41% or 1,663,133 households were either below the federal poverty level or below the ALICE threshold.

Michigan's current utility assistance program, MEAP serves just about 50,000 households per year, with the new dollars hoping to reach as many as 335,000 households. This still leaves a tremendous amount of vulnerable families in need and unable to access resources.

Support from this appropriation request will enable THAW to continue providing gas, electricity, and water payments that will help stabilize ALICE and low-income families, and prevent health emergencies, shutoffs, and homelessness. In addition to improving household stability, direct water assistance will also help reverse the ripple effects of blight, decay, and disinvestment in distressed neighborhoods.

The adverse effects of prolonged poverty on the well-being of children are well documented and are most pronounced among younger children. As noted in the Kids Count Data Center of the Annie E. Casey Foundation, as neighborhood poverty rates increase, undesirable outcomes rise, and opportunities for success are less likely.

## II. Why THAW?

THAW currently has effective, established processes for receiving and processing applications for utility assistance. In addition, THAW provides energy education, advocates for customers, and has effective systems in place to pay utility providers across the state of Michigan.

THAW provides utility assistance to vulnerable residents in all 83 MI Counties and reduces the chance that families will have to choose between paying for utilities or meeting other basic needs. THAW's MEAP Program aids with electricity, natural gas, and deliverable fuels, such as propane, wood, and cherry pits. Utilizing other funding sources, we also provide water bill assistance. Providing utility assistance statewide for decades has required THAW to aid with diverse fuel types and work with many utility providers throughout Michigan. THAW is well prepared to continue to work collaboratively with all energy providers to assist vulnerable families. THAW's streamlined and comprehensive approach to assistance helps stabilize families, neighborhoods, and communities.

THAW has successfully managed government and foundation grants as well as corporate and individual donations for 37 years. For example, THAW has been a continuous grantee of the Michigan Energy Assistance Program (MEAP) from the state of Michigan since 2014. Supported by the Max M. and Marjorie S. Fisher Foundation, THAW has provided utility assistance for low-income families with children living in Detroit's Brightmoor community since 2016. In addition, THAW has successfully administered a \$5,000,000 water affordability grant from the state of Michigan for the past three years, providing much needed water bill assistance, as well as plumbing repairs and remediation, to our state's most vulnerable families. THAW has a proven record of successfully administering these direct assistance programs and works to assure adherence to all relevant state and federal policies.

THAW is prepared to begin accepting applications for assistance and providing customers with services to enhance energy security as soon as the funds are disbursed. Our application process begins with a household needs assessment to align customer needs with both internal and external resources and services.

THAW's customized Salesforce CRMS streamlines our application process along with our customer service and program delivery model to create efficiencies in our internal processes and external referrals and partner communications. These efficiencies have allowed us the capacity to increase both our direct household services and assistance volumes.

THAW is committed to protecting the integrity of its systems and the customer data it stores. THAW has established a data and cyber-security plan and has a comprehensive, annual Security Risk Assessment conducted by an independent third party to ensure its data and information security protocols are up to date.

### III. Impact on Michigan families

Direct assistance with water, gas, and electric bills to low-income households will ensure each home's access to utility services so that caregivers can prepare meals, children can study, and households can maintain safe, clean, and healthy home environments. As a result of the project, assisted households will either (1) maintain active utility services or (2) have utility services restored. In addition, providing direct utility assistance and efficiency measures to low-income families alleviates both short- and long-term financial strain so that households can meet other priority needs, better manage home finances, and be assisted on their path to self-sufficiency.

THAW's energy assistance program integrates crisis intervention, short and long-term solutions, and preventive measures designed to help low-income Michigan households move toward energy security, and achieve greater self-sufficiency, keeping them safe, healthy, and warm.

Direct bill payment assistance will be used to resolve energy crises, restore services, and to

enroll eligible households in Affordable Payment Plans that make their bills more manageable and help customers pay their energy bills timely. THAW will make internal referrals to our EEA program, which provides energy efficiency measures designed to decrease energy usage with the installation of efficiency measures, energy efficiency education, financial wellness, and external referrals to programs like weatherization

services and Michigan 2-1-1.

Our service delivery model includes measures to help customers apply for assistance via multiple formats, such as online, virtual, in person, and mail. Applications will also be available at various community sites throughout the state. Utility partners will refer or work with their constituents to complete applications and submit them directly to THAW. THAW will also host quarterly Community Assistance Days (CADS) that will provide outreach and additional opportunities for customers to apply in person. THAW partners with community agencies during CADS to target specific populations such as senior citizens.

THAW's low-income households' service plan(s) are developed and implemented by Utility Assistance Center Specialists and Case Managers in partnership with the customer. The Utility Assistance Center (UAC) is the point of contact for customers, via phone through call center, online and in-person, assessing household needs to determine eligibility, provide the appropriate program services and both internal and external referrals for additional services. These services may include:

- Vendor Advocacy
- Financial education or budget conversation
- Energy education or conservation conversation
- Energy waste reduction services through home energy supplier programs
- Weatherization
- Short term case management
- Longer term case management

Customers with high usage are offered resources such as energy efficiency kits, referrals for home energy audits, and linkages to our internal Energy Efficiency Assistance program. These services will be included in the household service plans based on eligibility, customer needs, cohort assignments and customer requests.

The lasting effects of this program include households avoiding utility shutoffs, having consistent lower monthly utility bills, and lower energy costs into the future due to receiving additional services. Indicators of lasting effects include families not returning for assistance and families requiring less assistance if they apply for help again.

9. Attach documents here if needed:

N/A

10. The amount of state funding requested for the legislatively directed spending item.

5,000,000

11. Has the legislatively directed spending item previously received any of the following types of funding? Check all that apply.

[State, Local, Private]

12. Please select one of the following groups that describes the entity requesting the legislatively directed spending item:

Non-profit organization

13. For a non-profit organization, has the organization been operating within Michigan for the preceding 36 months?

Yes

14. For a non-profit organization, has the entity had a physical office within Michigan for the preceding 12 months?

Yes

15. For a non-profit organization, does the organization have a board of directors?

Yes

16. For a non-profit organization, list all the active members on the organization's board of directors and any other officers. If this question is not applicable, please type 'n/a.'

- a. Tanya Hill, President
- b. Cedric Flowers, Vice President
- c. Waymond Harris, Treasurer
- d. Christopher Moyer, Executive Member-At-Large
- e. Pat Alexander, Executive Member-At-Large
- f. Shafiq Bari, Member
- g. Charles Bullock, Member
- h. Romano Curti, Member
- i. Laura Dickerson, Member
- j. James. L. Doak, Member
- k. Jennifer Ebenhoeh, Member
- l. Katey Forth, Member
- m. Raynard Jones, Member
- n. Robert Porcher, Member
- o. Rev. QuanTez Pressley, Member
- p. Assad Turfe, Member
- q. Annie Whaley, Member
- r. Mark Winter, Member

17. "I certify that neither the sponsoring representative nor the sponsoring representative's staff or immediate family has a direct or indirect pecuniary interest in the legislatively directed spending item."

Yes, this is correct

18. Anticipated start and end dates for the legislatively directed spending item:

October 1, 2025 – September 31, 2026.

19. "I hereby certify that all information provided in this request is true and accurate."

Yes