

THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF PENNSYLVANIA

SENATE RESOLUTION

No. 165 Session of 2011

INTRODUCED BY FONTANA, PIPPY, RAFFERTY, COSTA, ALLOWAY, EARLL, ERICKSON, FARNESE, SCHWANK, M. WHITE, PILEGGI, BROWNE, FERLO, STACK, YUDICHAK, BOSCOLA, BRUBAKER, MENSCH, BLAKE, HUGHES, WOZNIAK, YAW, BREWSTER, TARTAGLIONE, WARD AND LEACH, AUGUST 2, 2011

REFERRED TO URBAN AFFAIRS AND HOUSING, AUGUST 2, 2011

A RESOLUTION

1 Directing the Legislative Budget and Finance Committee to study
2 the efficiency of the administrative functions and operations
3 of the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) and
4 make recommendations on how the program can increase
5 efficiency.

6 WHEREAS, The mission of the Low Income Home Energy Assistance
7 Program (LIHEAP) is to assist low-income households,
8 particularly those with the lowest incomes that pay a high
9 proportion of household income for home energy, primarily in
10 meeting their immediate home energy needs; and

11 WHEREAS, In Pennsylvania, LIHEAP helps low-income people pay
12 their heating bills through home heating energy assistance
13 grants and crisis grants; and

14 WHEREAS, Eligibility requirements were recently expanded to
15 Pennsylvanians earning up to \$35,280 for a family of four (an
16 increase from 150% to approximately 160% of the Federal poverty
17 level); and

18 WHEREAS, Under the new guidelines, upwards of 533,376

1 Pennsylvanians are eligible to receive assistance through
2 LIHEAP; and

3 WHEREAS, Further efficiencies and streamlining of functions
4 may result in savings through administrative and operations
5 changes, with more funding available to assist low-income
6 Pennsylvanians; therefore be it

7 RESOLVED, That the Senate direct the Legislative Budget and
8 Finance Committee to conduct a study on the efficiency of the
9 current LIHEAP administrative and operations functions; and be
10 it further

11 RESOLVED, That the Legislative Budget and Finance Committee
12 study at least all of the following:

13 (1) Number of telephone calls answered, and those going
14 unanswered, at the Statewide LIHEAP telephone number and its
15 staffing levels.

16 (2) Reason for the applicant's call to the Statewide
17 LIHEAP telephone number.

18 (3) Average time to process applications, cash or
19 crisis, and for applicants to be notified of their grants,
20 cash or crisis.

21 (4) Number of ineligible applications and reasons for
22 ineligibility.

23 (5) Staffing for crisis, contracted and internal, as
24 well as for the cash program on State and county levels.

25 (6) Number of intake sites and average distance and wait
26 time for applicants traveling to those intake sites.

27 (7) Level of use of the PROMISE system by utility
28 companies, requirements in utilizing the system and time per
29 account with use of the PROMISE system.

30 (8) Average time for a utility company to be paid for a

1 cash program or crisis payment and how paid, including method
2 and number of payments.

3 (9) Use of supplemental payments when not based on need.

4 (10) Use of cash grant and application to future utility
5 payments versus arrearages.

6 (11) Review of mailing costs, paper application costs
7 and record retention, particularly as it relates to ID theft
8 prevention through a paperless system;

9 and be it further

10 RESOLVED, That the Legislative Budget and Finance Committee
11 study the efficiency of the administrative functions and
12 operations of the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program
13 (LIHEAP) within the Department of Public Welfare; and be it
14 further

15 RESOLVED, That the Legislative Budget and Finance Committee
16 provide the Senate with its findings and recommendations on how
17 the Commonwealth can increase the efficiency of the LIHEAP
18 program to better serve its citizenry; and be it further

19 RESOLVED, That the Legislative Budget and Finance Committee
20 report its findings and recommendations to the Senate no later
21 than one year after the adoption of this resolution.