

## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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### **Federal Shutdown Limits CAPV Fuel Assistance to Heat Emergencies Only as Heat Season Begins**

*Program remains open with extended Winter Moratorium protection in place through April 1, 2026*

**Greenfield, 11/3/2025** – Community Action Pioneer Valley (CAPV) announced today that due to the ongoing federal government shutdown, the Home Energy Assistance Program (HEAP) will be limited to heat emergencies only as the heat season begins November 1, 2025.

CAPV's Fuel Assistance program continues to accept applications but currently has limited funds available for heat emergencies only. During this period, the organization will not be able to send approval letters or provide benefit award amounts to approved participants. Notification letters will only be sent for incomplete applications.

Fuel Assistance programs around the country are funded by a federal program called HEAP (formerly LIHEAP), the Heating and Energy Assistance Program. These contracts have not been issued due to the shutdown, and no funding has been authorized, and thus, Fuel Assistance programs around the country are unable to provide regular awards. Community Action's Fuel Assistance program alone provides approximately \$8 million dollars in heating assistance to Hampshire and Franklin County residents, keeping nearly 10,000 households safe and warm during the winter months, and brings those dollars into our local economy through payments to largely local vendors.

**"Once the shutdown ends, and we receive our federal LIHEAP funds, we expect to resume normal Fuel Assistance procedures as soon as possible, sending out approval letters and paying benefits for eligible households,"** said Janna Tetreault, Associate Director of Programs for CAPV.

### **Heat Emergency Criteria**

A heat emergency is defined as:

- Delivered heating fuel sources (oil, propane/LPG, kerosene, wood, pellets, coal): no fuel available, within 3 days of running out, or 1/8th tank of oil/kerosene or 20% tank propane/LPG

- Electric or natural gas primary heat source with a shut-off notice
- Electric account that powers primary heat with a shut-off notice

### **Extended Winter Moratorium Protection**

The Winter Moratorium has been activated early this season, running from October 27, 2025, through April 1, 2026. Low-income customers are protected from utility termination during this period, provided they submit verification of financial hardship to their utility company.

The moratorium applies to customers of Berkshire Gas, Eversource Gas or Electric, and National Grid. Municipally owned companies are not obligated to participate.

Households must complete and submit a financial hardship form to their utility company to receive shut-off protection. Forms are available on utility company websites and through CAPV's Fuel Assistance webpage at [communityaction.us/program/fuel-assistance/](https://communityaction.us/program/fuel-assistance/).

### **Application Information**

Residents seeking Fuel Assistance, emergency Fuel Assistance, or checking their application status may call 413-774-2310 or visit the Fuel Assistance website, [communityaction.us/program/fuel-assistance/](https://communityaction.us/program/fuel-assistance/), for additional resources.

"Amidst the onslaught of difficulties created by the federal shutdown and threats to critical federally funded programs, Community Action is open and ready to help our neighbors stay fed, warm, supported, and connected," said Lev BenEzra, Executive Director of Community Action Pioneer Valley. "I've been in this role for just one week, and what I see is a community of people showing up to support each other. Our staff are working, across every single program, to make sure that our neighbors have what they need."

"One thing you can do to help," BenEzra shared, "is to help us make some noise about getting Fuel Assistance funding out into our communities." There is some concern that even when the shutdown ends, there may be a delay in getting funding to the states. "Call your federal congresspeople and tell them 'It's cold up here! We need you to act to ensure swift action on fuel assistance funding when the government reopens.'"

### **About Community Action Pioneer Valley**

Community Action Pioneer Valley serves Franklin and Hampshire Counties through programs that help families achieve self-reliance, serving 28,000 people navigating poverty

annually. CAPV's 40 programs help ensure that our neighbors with low incomes are fed, warm, supported, and connected.