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**Subject:** Most Vermont Households to See Higher LIHEAP Benefit This Year

**For Immediate Release**

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**Most Vermont Households to See Higher LIHEAP Benefit This Year**

**Waterbury, VT**— Gov. Peter Shumlin, AHS Secretary Hal Cohen, and DCF Commissioner Ken Schatz announced today announced that the average Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) benefit will increase for most Vermont households this year. Last winter the average benefit was \$699; That will rise to \$865 this year.

Vermont anticipates receiving approximately \$18.9 million in federal funds for this year's LIHEAP program. These funds will help over 21,500 low-income Vermont households to heat their homes this winter by paying a portion of their home heating bills. "Most Vermonters will get a higher fuel benefit this year because fuel prices have remained steady while caseloads have been going down," said AHS Secretary Hal Cohen.

"This is an incredibly important program that helps many Vermonters during the cold winter months," Gov. Shumlin said. "I am pleased that the average benefit will increase to help those Vermonters who need it most. I am also pleased that caseloads are on the decline, a good sign that Vermonters who have been struggling are seeing incomes increase. I want to thank Vermont's congressional delegation for their work to secure this funding and their continued support for this important program."

"This program is critical to keeping Vermonters with lower incomes warm this winter," said DCF Commissioner Ken Schatz.

|                | <b>Average benefit</b> | <b>Average cost per gallon (<i>blended rate</i>)</b> | <b>Average gallons purchased with benefit</b> | <b>% of fuel costs covered</b> |
|----------------|------------------------|--|---|--------------------------------|
| 2015/16 season | \$699                  | \$2.11   | 331   | 43%                            |
| 2016/17 season | \$865                  | \$2.11   | 410   | 54%                            |

Households may be eligible for Fuel Assistance if their gross household incomes are equal to or less than 185% of the federal poverty level, whether they own their homes or rent. The resources they own (e.g., savings accounts, retirement accounts, and property) will not be counted. To learn more about Fuel Assistance, call 1-800-479-6151 or go to [dcf.vermont.gov/benefits](http://dcf.vermont.gov/benefits).

Green Mountain Power and Vermont Gas customers who meet income guidelines may be eligible for a discount on their monthly utility bills. To learn more, call 1-800-775-0516 or go to [energyhelp.vt.gov](http://energyhelp.vt.gov).

Fuel benefits for the 2016-17 winter season will begin being issued around the third week of November.

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*The Vermont Department for Children and Families delivers a wide array of programs and services to Vermonters in areas such as child care, child development, child protection, child support, disability determination, and economic benefits that help meet basic needs.*