



**STATE OF VERMONT
GENERAL ASSEMBLY**

CLIMATE CAUCUS

FEBRUARY 24, 2016

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Dear Committees on Appropriations and Ways & Means,

We urge you to regain lost ground for the low-income Weatherization Assistance Programs (WAPs). As you know, it is estimated we have 125,000 Vermonters living in "fuel poverty." The average household that gets weatherized saves \$400 – \$600 a year, every year. For every \$1 invested in this program \$2.51 is returned to the household and community.

Since ARRA and GMP merger money have dried up, funding for the program has been a scramble. In FY16 the total funding dropped from \$12 million to \$9 million. With lower fuel prices and reduced consumption thanks to a mild winter, a straight re-authorization of the gross receipts tax wouldn't even keep pace with the governor's recommended appropriation.

As you are likely aware, last year's drop in funding resulted in a loss of 65 highly skilled, good-paying jobs and greatly reduced capacity. Furthermore, we are failing to use the investments Vermont has made in equipment such as trucks and blowers.

Vermont's carbon reduction targets set in 2008 would require us to fund low-income weatherization at about \$18 million a year. Recognizing our current budget challenges we ask that the program be funded at \$12 million. Weatherization is considered one of the most effective methods of combating climate change, has clear economic benefits for the families involved, and boosts our economy. Sustainable and predictable funding is critical to our future.

We submit this letter with the support of a majority of the Legislative Climate Caucus.

Sincerely,

Handwritten signature of Chris Pearson in black ink.

Rep. Chris Pearson
Co-Chair

Handwritten signature of Mary Hooper in black ink.

Rep. Mary Hooper
Co-Chair