

April 6, 2026

The Honorable John Kennedy
Chair
Subcommittee on Energy and Water
Development, and Related Agencies
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Patty Murray
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Energy and Water
Development, and Related Agencies
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Chuck Fleischmann
Chair
Subcommittee on Energy and Water
Development, and Related Agencies
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Marcy Kaptur
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Energy and Water
Development, and Related Agencies
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chair Kennedy, Ranking Member Murray, Chair Fleischmann, and Ranking Member Kaptur,

WE ACT for Environmental Justice (WE ACT) is a community-based nonprofit organization committed to advancing environmental justice and ensuring that all communities—especially those historically overburdened—have access to safe, healthy, affordable, energy-efficient and climate-resilient homes.¹ We respectfully urge the Subcommittee to **provide \$375 million for the Department of Energy’s (DOE) Weatherization Assistance Program, \$15 million for Training and Technical Assistance (T&TA), and \$52 million for its Weatherization Readiness Program (WRF) for Fiscal Year 2027.** These investments are critical to lowering energy burdens, improving housing quality, and protecting the health and safety of U.S. households, especially for Indigenous, communities of color, and low-income households.

WAP: Popular, Effective and Impactful Federal Program

The Weatherization Assistance Program (“WAP”) is one of oldest, largest and most effective whole-of-home federal energy efficiency programs in the country.² The program designed to save low-income households money on their energy bills has earned enduring bipartisan support. This

¹ WE ACT for Environmental Justice. (n.d.). *WE ACT for Environmental Justice*. <https://weact.org/>

² U.S. Department of Energy. (2016). *Celebrating 40 years of America’s Weatherization Assistance Program*. <https://www.energy.gov/cmei/articles/celebrating-40-years-americas-weatherization-assistance-program>

broad support was validated when Congress provided \$329 million to WAP for FY2026 – a \$3 million increase from the previous fiscal year - despite the President’s request to eliminate the program.³

WAP has also delivered proven results. Since its inception in 1976, WAP has helped over 7.2 million low-income households, providing weatherization services that make their homes more energy efficient, lower energy bills, and improve health and safety.⁴ According to the DOE, the program saves participating families an average of \$372 in energy costs annually.⁵ There is also a strong return on investment, delivering economic, public health, and environmental benefits. For every \$1.00 invested in weatherization, \$1.72 is generated in energy benefits as well as \$2.78 in non-energy benefits such as reduced missed days of work and school and out-of-pocket medical expenses.⁶ Research also shows that in a typical year of WAP operations, weatherization reduces carbon emissions by more than 2 million metric tons and supports roughly 8,500 jobs nationwide.⁷

WAP: A Crucial Lifeline for Environmental Justice Communities

These benefits are especially significant for Indigenous communities, low-income households and people of color who face some of the nation's highest energy burdens,^{8,9} and are acutely vulnerable to climate-induced extreme weather events.¹⁰ This is a direct consequence of a legacy of disinvestment and discriminatory practices, which left formerly redlined communities concentrated in high risk areas and more exposed to extreme heat, flooding, and other climate disasters.¹¹

³ The White House. (2025). *Fiscal Year 2026 discretionary budget request*.

<https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2025/05/Fiscal-Year-2026-Discretionary-Budget-Request.pdf>

⁴ U.S. Department of Energy. (n.d.). *Weatherization Assistance Program*.

<https://www.energy.gov/scep/wap/weatherization-assistance-program>

⁵ *Ibid*

⁶ U.S. Department of Energy. (2022). *Weatherization Assistance Program fact sheet*.

https://www.energy.gov/sites/default/files/2022-06/wap-fact-sheet_0622.pdf

⁷ Rose, E. M., & Hawkins, B. A. (2020). *Background data and statistics on low-income energy use and burden for the Weatherization Assistance Program: Update for fiscal year 2020* (ORNL/TM-2020/1566). Oak Ridge National Laboratory. https://weatherization.ornl.gov/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/ORNL_TM-2020_1566.pdf

⁸ Drehobl, A., Ross, L., & Ayala, R. (2020). *How high are household energy burdens?* American Council for an Energy-Efficient Economy. <https://www.aceee.org/sites/default/files/pdfs/u2006.pdf>

⁹ **38% of U.S. households experience a high or severe energy burden, with the highest burdens concentrated in communities of color.** Natural Resources Defense Council. (2023). *Energy-burdened communities tool*.

<https://www.nrdc.org/resources/energy-burdened-communities-tool>

¹⁰ U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. (2021). *Climate change and social vulnerability in the United States: A focus on six impact sectors*.

https://www.epa.gov/system/files/documents/2021-09/climate-vulnerability_september-2021_508.pdf

¹¹ Carasso, A., & Ricketts, L. (2023). *Historical redlining and the siting of fossil fuel power plants in the United States* (Working Paper No. 22-09R). Federal Reserve Bank of Richmond.

https://www.richmondfed.org/-/media/RichmondFedOrg/publications/research/working_papers/2022/wp22-09r.pdf

For example, in New York City (NYC), where WE ACT is headquartered, nearly 30% of households are energy burdened, spending more than 6% of their income on utilities.¹² At the same time, extreme heat is one of the city’s deadliest climate threats, killing millions of New Yorkers each summer. NYC is projected to experience up to 10 heat waves per season by 2080.¹³ These overlapping burdens fall disproportionately on low-income Black and Latino residents in historically redlined neighborhoods such as the South Bronx, East New York, and Central Harlem—areas where residents are also more likely to live in older, poorly insulated, energy-inefficient housing. As a result, Black New Yorkers account for 50 percent of heat-related deaths,¹⁴ despite making up only 21.9 percent of the city’s population.¹⁵

This pattern in New York City reflects the experience of environmental justice communities nationwide with a heightened risk of respiratory and other illnesses or even death and struggle to afford the rising costs of heating and cooling amid intensifying energy affordability, housing quality, and climate crises. Yet, WAP has been chronically underfunded, with annual appropriations remaining at levels far both below its statutory authorization and at the scale required to meet national need, leaving millions of eligible households unserved.^{16,17} More funding is required for the program to reach the households who need energy relief, climate resilience and critical health and safety improvements the most.

WRF: Funding the Gaps

Expanded investment also ensures that millions of households gain access to pre-weatherization repairs and energy efficiency improvements that make homes safer, healthier, and more affordable. Although 39.5 million low-income homes are eligible for the program, every year only 35,000 homes receive weatherization services and technologies.¹⁸ With 60 percent of U.S. homes built before 1980,¹⁹ including rental stock,²⁰ often low-income households and people of color live in older, substandard homes marked by years of disrepair, structural deficiencies,

¹² N.Y.C. Env’t Just. All., NYC Energy Burden Report (2023), <https://www.nyc-eja.org/publications/energyburden2023>.

¹³ Office of the New York City Comptroller. (2024). *Record highs: Tackling energy insecurity in the heat of the climate crisis*. <https://comptroller.nyc.gov/reports/record-highs-tackling-energy-insecurity-in-the-heat-of-the-climate-crisis/>

¹⁴ New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene. (2013). *Data table 47: Heat-related mortality*. <https://www1.nyc.gov/assets/doh/downloads/pdf/epi/datatable47.pdf>

¹⁵ U.S. Census Bureau. (2024). *QuickFacts: New York City, New York*. <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/newyorkcitynewyork/PST045224>

¹⁶ Congressional Research Service. (2020). *Weatherization Assistance Program (WAP): Eligibility, funding, and formula allocations* (CRS Report No. R46418). <https://www.congress.gov/crs-product/R46418>

¹⁷ U.S. Department of Energy. (2024). *Weatherization Assistance Program briefing book*. U.S. Department of Energy. https://www.energy.gov/sites/default/files/2024-11/wap-briefing-book_102024.pdf

¹⁸ *Ibid*

¹⁹ Fabino, A. (2024). *People living in old houses rises as home building struggles*. Newsweek. <https://www.newsweek.com/old-houses-rise-home-building-struggles-aging-housing-stock-remodeling-boom-1869571>

²⁰ Joint Center for Housing Studies of Harvard University. (2024). *America’s rental housing 2024*. https://www.jchs.harvard.edu/sites/default/files/reports/files/Harvard_JCHS_Americas_Rental_Housing_2024.pdf

serious health hazards such as lead, mold, and pests, and unreliable access to electricity and heat.²¹

These costly pre-existing and long-standing issues block eligible households from accessing WAP and other state and local energy efficiency and climate resiliency programs. WE ACT has long championed legislation such as the New York State Green Affordable Pre-Electrification (GAP) Fund (S.3315/A.2101) that helps low-income households overcome barriers to electrification, addressing deferred maintenance and eliminating legacy environmental hazards and ensuring vulnerable New Yorkers have equitable access to programs that make their homes healthy and affordable.^{22,23} The Gap Fund model demonstrates how modest investments in readiness can unlock life-changing energy and health benefits for families.

At the federal level, one in five (19 percent) of income-eligible households are deferred from WAP because of conditions such as roof leaks, electrical hazards, mold and other health, safety and structural issues.²⁴ It is essential the Weatherization Readiness Fund (WRF) receive sustained and sufficient funding to address this backlog and ensure these households become weatherization-ready, removing barriers that prevent them from accessing critical weatherization services and energy efficiency upgrades and the health, safety, and energy cost savings that follow.

Created through the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2022 (P.L. 117-103), the WRF represents the first dedicated federal funding stream to address these barriers. With it set to sunset at the end of its three-cycle, it is important that the WRF be reauthorized and adequately funded to improve health and living conditions, reduce delays and inequities created by high WAP deferral rates, and broaden access to weatherization services and energy efficiency upgrades.

WAP: Empowering Communities, Sustaining Livelihoods in the Clean Energy Economy

Training and Technical Assistance (T&TA) is another critical component of WAP. T&TA provides dedicated funding that supports training and maintaining a skilled workforce while also helping states, territories and Tribal nations keep pace with new technologies, updated building standards, and the growing need for culturally competent, community-based service delivery. It ensures that low-income households and communities of color receive safe, high-quality, effective energy efficiency upgrades and weatherization services delivered by qualified technicians.

²¹ Hernández, D., Krasniqi, Q., & Peek, A. (2023). *Energy insecurity in the United States* [Fact sheet]. Center on Global Energy Policy, Columbia University.

<https://www.energypolicy.columbia.edu/publications/energy-insecurity-in-the-united-states/>

²² New York State Senate. (2025). *S.3315: Establishes the green affordable pre-electrification program (2025–2026 Reg. Sess.)*. <https://www.nysenate.gov/legislation/bills/2025/S3315>

²³ New York State Assembly. (2025). *A.2101: Establishes the green affordable pre-electrification program (2025–2026 Reg. Sess.)*. <https://www.nysenate.gov/legislation/bills/2025/A2101>

²⁴ Farrell, D., Mah, J., Sussman, R., & Specian, M. (2025). *Estimating the impacts of weatherization readiness programs*. American Council for an Energy-Efficient Economy. <https://www.aceee.org/research-report/b2504>

As mentioned previously, our communities face the highest energy burdens and often live in the oldest, poorly insulated and least efficient homes. The training and subsequently, quality of work they receive directly impacts their health, comfort, and long-term energy savings. Equitable building decarbonization must empower disadvantaged communities with the skills, certifications, and opportunities to lead in the clean-energy future and sustain their communities. T&TA funding also creates direct pathways into renewable-energy and energy efficiency jobs for these communities, ensuring they benefit not only from weatherization services but also from the economic opportunities of the clean-energy transition. Sustained federal investment in T&TA is therefore central to delivering equitable outcomes, strengthening the workforce pipeline, and ensuring that the clean-energy economy and its benefits reaches the communities facing the greatest burdens.

Conclusion

WAP has long enjoyed strong bipartisan support because it is cost-effective, delivers enduring energy burden relief and health and safety benefits for constituents, and a lifeline for low-income households and communities of color. At a time when extreme weather, aging housing stock, and rising energy costs are placing unprecedented strain on vulnerable communities, it is more important than ever to strengthen this program. For the second year in a row, President Trump's budget proposal zeroes out WAP funding. We are grateful that Congress rejected this proposal in the Fiscal Year 2026 budget, which would have undermined decades of progress and left millions of households without essential support.

WE ACT respectfully requests that you provide continued support for the program. Ultimately, this funding will address backlogs and expand access to weatherization services, energy energy upgrades and renewable energy technologies to high-need households, advance environmental justice, and protect public health. These investments will deliver immediate relief to households, create good-paying jobs, and build long-term resilience in the communities that need it most. Thank you for your leadership and consideration.

Sincerely,

Leslie G. Fields
Chief Federal Officer, WE ACT for Environmental Justice

CC: The Honorable Charles Schumer
Democratic Leader Chair of the Senate

The Honorable Hakeem Jeffries
Minority Leader