

Testimony for October 13, 2021

Submitted by Susan Olshuff, ener-G-save/Cooler Communities
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Please add the following testimony to those given today, Oct. 13, 2021. I'm sorry I couldn't join the meeting until 1pm.

First of all, a huge thank you to all of you working endlessly to perfect much as possible to the voices of the people in our State. It means a lot to be heard. I recognize that the job before you all is immense, from every possible perspective, the climate, the budget, the many opinions, the sheer complexity, and making sure what you propose is actually possible to do. Thank you.

I listened in from 1 to 4, and want to share some thoughts in no particular order.

- Working in the communities of western MA now for over 5 years, we have seen the challenge of getting people to take advantage of the free programs available to them. The Partnership First Program is great, but the question of how we can teach people about heat pumps so that they will take that leap is immense. Having worked with HPCs, what about training them to explain and promote heat pumps for the average person (even if they're not the one's who will install the heat pumps) and incentivizing them generously for people who sign on and get a heat pump. HPCs are underpaid and have more capacity than we use them for, so in our efforts to train more people, why not start with those who are already deeply involved. This will also help with the combining of weatherization and sale of heat pumps at one home.
- RE: educating the public about heat pumps. It's not easy to understand for the lay person who already might struggle to just make sense of an audit and insulation job. What about, instead of all the money spent on TV ads talking about weatherization (or in addition to), Mass Save finds a hot shot video maker to make a number of eye-catching, can't-turn-away educational spots introducing people to the heat pump. Show it to them. Tell them (briefly) how it works, and more extensively, how it will save them money and save our planet and help meet our state's goals of carbon reduction. Flood the airwaves with a series that will leave everyone who watches tv with a recognition and basic understanding. Most people I know go make popcorn when the same old Mass Save ad comes on. (no disrespect meant... just it's a time for something new)
- RE: monthly data – YES. Especially for EJ communities. Who is being served? Where do they live? Were they served by CAP agencies? For what? And data very regularly, otherwise, in a blink, we'll be at 2025 realizing we should have done far more. At the least, monthly reports. Data is important to track the education programs the utility programs run in schools, again, particularly to track for EJ communities and numbers.
- RE: emergency situations that call for heat mid-winter. Give this more thought. Are there ways to solve the problem with oil or gas (because it's a quick fix in 20 below weather) without that meaning that that is the way it will be for years? There has to be ways...
- With all the new Community Partnership cities and towns coming on in the new year for 3 years, they will be focusing on EJ communities. Some CAP agencies around the state make it easy for people to sign up for fuel assistance and their audit, etc. Others make it difficult, very difficult.

People call and call and don't get answers. With the goals set to serve these communities increasing, how will this be possible if the local CAP agency makes it hard for the very people who need the services the most, those who will benefit from financial savings and health benefits, and those who may not have time to make call after call after call. I have heard too often... "I called and called, and gave up. I felt totally disrespected." Is there a way that the new MassSave plan can put pressure on all the CAP agencies to better serve everyone? There has got to be. Does each CAP agency have specific goals? Are they high enough? I have heard that one reached goals in late November, and stopped doing audits for the month of December. (I'd love to be shown this information is incorrect.) Please make sure that the CAP agencies have enough staff to handle the phones in a timely and courteous fashion. I was glad to hear there are efforts to streamline verification of income for these services. Let's make it easy, not hard. With community organizations onboard, find ways their job doesn't have to include fighting with the local CAP agency.

I hope some of these ideas might be helpful. After the long process you're all going through, perhaps all these things have been considered. Just wanted to add my two cents.

And my gratitude.

Warmly,

Susan Olshuff