

Press Release...



FROM THE OFFICE OF STATE REPRESENTATIVE LA SHAWN K. FORD

For Immediate Release:

July 18, 2015

Ford Urges Gov. Rauner and the General Assembly to Take Action to Restore LIHEAP & CEDA Funding

Action Needed as Heat Wave Hits

CHICAGO- State Rep. La Shawn K. Ford, D-Chicago, is working with Community & Economic Development Association of Cook County (CEDA) President Harold Rice and Speaker of the House Michael J. Madigan to prepare and pass an appropriations bill to restore funding for the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) program. Due to the Illinois budget veto by Governor Rauner, many federally funded programs, including LIHEAP, cannot continue those services to communities in need. This comes at a time where Chicago has been issued a heat advisory warning.

The federally funded LIHEAP program helps keep families safe and healthy through initiatives that assist families with energy costs in winter or in summer, including home energy bills, energy crises and weatherization and energy-related minor home repairs. LIHEAP is one of many programs CEDA offers to assist low-income residents of Cook County. According to CEDA's website, "As of COB Thursday, July 2, 2015 CEDA will be shutting down the majority of its programs and services. This shutdown is a direct result of the Illinois State budget not being approved. The following programs will not be available until further notice: Energy Services, which includes LIHEAP, Percentage of Income Payment Plan (PIPP), and ComEd Special Residential Hardship; Weatherization; and Community Services Block Grants (CSBG), which will include Skills Training, Dental, Vision, Auto and Water Bill Assistance.

"20 years ago, a deadly heat wave gripped Chicago, killing more than 730 people," said Ford. "It was one of the deadliest natural disasters in the history of Chicago and the nation. We cannot allow a tragedy as what occurred in 1995 to happen again, if we can prevent it. I urge the General Assembly and Governor Rauner to take action to restore funds for LIHEAP and related programs so CEDA can do its job, before we are faced with this type of situation again. I hope the governor can find a way to use an executive order to fund the programs."

The 1995 Chicago heat wave led to around 730 heat-related deaths in Chicago over a period of five days. Most of the victims of the heat wave were elderly poor residents of the city, who could not afford air conditioning and did not open windows or sleep outside out of fear of crime.

"We need action on this matter, while the state budget is being debated," said Rice. "These federal funds have nothing to do with balancing the state budget, nor can the state of Illinois use these funds for any other purpose, which is why I don't understand why the federally funded programs cannot be allowed to continue receiving these funds. I am deeply concerned that our families who are in need of these services will fall deeper into poverty because of the interruption in services. I am asking for swift action to restore the flow of these funds, so that we can provide some of the much needed services required by our low income residents state-wide."

Ford/Restore LIHEAP Funding, p.2

According to CEDA, they provide services to over 500,000 clients throughout all of Cook County. Collectively, community action agencies such as CEDA serve more than one million individuals statewide every year. Additionally, community action agencies in the state of Illinois have had to lay off more than 2,500 staff due to this blockage of funding.

Additional negative impacts of suspended State and Federal funds include: over 43,000 households in Cook County will not be served if state funds are suspended; over 28,000 households that were enrolled in the Percentage of Income Payment Plan (PIPP) program will lose their benefits; clients on the PIPP program will have utility arrearages placed back on their utility bills; another 20,000 households will not be serviced by the interruption of Federal funds for WIC, weatherization and CSBG programs.

Supporters of a petition to support restoration of funding may use this link:

http://pac.petitions.moveon.org/sign/fund-liheap-cede-today?source=c.em&r_by=9616806

For more information, contact one of Ford's constituent service offices: 816 S. Oak Park Avenue in Oak Park at [708-445-3673](tel:708-445-3673), 4800 W. Chicago Avenue in Chicago at [773-378-5902](tel:773-378-5902) or in the Stratton Office Building in Springfield at [217-782-5962](tel:217-782-5962), or visit www.lashawnford.com.

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