

## A Bill to Expand Energy Assistance

SF 486

The **Energy Assistance program** provides vital relief during the winter. The Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP or EAP) has helped Minnesota households for over 40 years. Income-qualified renters and homeowners can receive funding to help with heating bills and emergencies. The program helps about 130,000 Minnesota households each season and is a pipeline to the Weatherization Assistance Program, which permanently reduces energy costs. Families that contact service providers about Energy Assistance are also connected with other services, helping to stabilize the whole household.

### Energy Assistance falls far short of the need.

There is not enough funding. Only about a quarter of eligible households receive assistance. Facing compounding pressures from inflation and the cost of housing, Minnesotans are more than \$100 million past-due to their utilities – and shutoffs for nonpayment have reached new highs. In 2024, more Minnesotans had their electricity and gas service disconnected than in any other entire year since at least to 2015. *(Figures include PUC-regulated utilities only.)*

Assistance is not available when it is most needed to prevent shutoffs. The majority of shutoffs occur between June and September – when Energy Assistance is not typically available to help.

Assistance is not available to help with cooling needs. As our summers become hotter and more unpredictable, the absence of cooling assistance leaves thousands of Minnesotans – elderly residents, young children, and those with pre-existing medical conditions – exposed to severe health risks.

**Most states provide Energy Assistance in the summer months.** 30 US states and territories provide LIHEAP assistance for cooling, including our Midwest neighbors in North Dakota and Nebraska. Policy guidance from the US Dept. of Health and Human Services suggests states extend Energy Assistance to cooling.

**This bill seeks to help low-income households, who pay a high proportion of household income for home energy, in meeting their immediate home energy needs. It will:**

- Prevent shutoffs by keeping the Energy Assistance Program open through the summer.
- Allow a greater number of eligible Minnesota households to receive assistance.
- Provide state funding to existing infrastructure and service providers.



For more information, contact Megan Verdeja: [megan@unitedstrategiesllc.com](mailto:megan@unitedstrategiesllc.com) or 612-382-2292.