

Weatherizing Homes of Ohio's Low-Income Families

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Energy spending in Ohio increased by 58 percent over the past decade. By 2012, Ohioans spent nearly \$50 billion on energy, equal to nine percent of our gross state product. Over \$9 billion of that went to heat and power our homes—\$3.2 billion on natural gas and other fuels for heating, and \$6.1 billion on electricity.

The average Ohio household spent \$2,052 on heat and power in 2012, but low-income households are especially hard-hit: more than 300,000 Ohio households have home energy bills exceeding 30 percent of their annual income. The state spent \$277.5 million to reduce utility bills to six percent of household income for 350,000 households, plus \$162.7 million more on crisis aversion.

Ohio's low income residential weatherization program, a national leader, reduces costs by more than 20 percent, makes homes more comfortable, reduces pollution and energy use, and makes it easier for families to meet their basic needs. Since 2003, Ohio has weatherized 95,000 homes, 40,000 of them with federal stimulus dollars.

The success of this program calls for a substantial expansion of investment. Due to inadequate state, federal and utility funding we weatherize far too few homes. And in late spring of 2014, Governor John Kasich signed into law a bill freezing Ohio's energy efficiency standard for two years while assessing whether to eliminate it altogether, while will result in an estimated loss of more than \$300 million investment into low-income weatherization services, enough to weatherize nearly 50,000 homes over the next ten years.

To build on the success of the weatherization program:

- Require utilities to invest in home weatherization for low-income families. The state should revive Ohio's energy efficiency standard and further incentivize utilities to make greater use of low-income weatherization to meet requirements.
- Make low-income home weatherization an important component of Ohio's State Implementation Plan for meeting the Environmental Protection Agencies carbon rule.
- Increased federal support for weatherization services can provide additional tools to states to help them meet their carbon reduction goals. Create additional avenues to combine federal, state and local funding for weatherization, home repair and health service delivery.
- Expand the Energy Efficiency Resource Standards to the federal level.

Key findings

- Ohio's Home Weatherization Assistance Program, one of the best in the nation, lowers home energy bills by more than 20%.
- Weatherization also generates jobs, reduces pollution, and increases home values.
- Ohio's clean energy standards drove a seven-fold increase in investment in low-income weatherization. These standards were recently frozen. If eliminated altogether, this will result in a \$300 million loss over a 10-year period to low-income home weatherization.
- By increasing federal funding for weatherization and restoring Ohio clean energy standards we can again incentivize home weatherization.