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## **MASSCAP, Community Action Agencies, MEDA Launch Annual Statewide Heating Help Awareness Campaign**

### *A Focus on the Home Energy Assistance Program*

**Worcester, MA – October 28, 2021** – MASSCAP, along with Worcester Community Action Council (WCAC), the network of Community Action Agencies in Massachusetts and the Massachusetts Energy Directors Association (MEDA), will launch its annual statewide awareness campaign to ensure that vulnerable Massachusetts families are able to keep safe, warm and healthy this winter. Heating help programs include both fuel assistance and energy efficiency and weatherization programs.

The awareness campaign started today with a live kickoff event at Worcester City Hall that was also streamed on [Facebook Live](#). Speakers included Congressman Jim McGovern, Senator Harriette L. Chandler (D-Worcester), Worcester City Manager Edward Augustus as well as representatives from MEDA and a WCAC client. The awareness campaign will include television and digital advertising across the state as well as billboards and local outreach. A new video explaining the program details, eligibility and benefits will be launched at the kickoff. This year applying has never been easier with the ability to apply online directly to the agency serving your town. The website [heatinghelpMA.org](http://heatinghelpMA.org) (connected to the MASSCAP website) provides information for those in need of assistance as well as a link to the online application.

“Even before the challenges of the last year and a half, staying warm in the winter was a struggle for many people in Massachusetts,” reminded Congressman Jim McGovern. “Nobody, and I repeat, nobody should have to choose between staying warm in the winter and putting food on the table or getting the care they need to stay healthy. Nobody should have to decide between heating and eating.”

“Every household in the state should be able to stay warm during the long and cold New England winter. I commend MASSCAP, WCAC, and MEDA in launching this far-reaching campaign to provide fuel assistance and energy efficiency programs to disadvantaged populations in Massachusetts” said Senator Chandler.

“We wanted to make sure that we got the word out that there is help available and you can access it in a convenient and secure way right from your own home,” Joe Diamond, Executive Director, MASSCAP, explained. “The goals that we pursue have everything to do with helping our vulnerable friends and neighbors living with low incomes to become economically stable and mobile. The Home Energy Assistance Program is a comprehensive approach to helping so many households across the

Commonwealth heat their homes safely and efficiently. We work closely with allied organizations to help us reach the people we know need it the most.”

The Home Energy Assistance Program is part of a federal program (LIHEAP) that helps low-income households address energy costs. In Massachusetts, the program is administered by DCHD, the state Department of Housing and Community Development, in partnership with a network of local agencies made up of 22 community-based organizations, including 20 Community Action Agencies (CAAs), the City of Cambridge, and the New England Farm Workers Council.

“This program is a lifeline for vulnerable families and individuals as we head into the cold weather season,” City Manager Edward M. Augustus, Jr. said. “The COVID-19 pandemic only exacerbated the difficult situation many low-income households already found themselves in, and a program like this can mean families won’t have to choose between putting food on the table and keeping the heat running. That is a decision no one should ever have to make.”

Heating Assistance and its associated Energy Efficiency opportunities provide not only payment relief and utility discounts but also life-saving emergency heating repair and replacement and stabilizing, full scale energy efficiency measures. These holistic programs allow both renters and homeowners to spend a smaller percentage of their income to meet their energy costs.

“Just when you think you have survived a pandemic...Your house gets struck by lightning. The insurance company won’t cover your furnace because it’s old, and you can’t get a loan to pay for your furnace because you’re self-employed, and Covid prevented you from a steady income! Where do you go - who do you call - what do you do?” asked Cathy DiPilato, now a WCAC heating help client. “Thank god I was referred to Worcester Community Action Council. Otherwise, I would never been able to afford to replace my furnace.”

“WCAC stands ready to support households from throughout Central Massachusetts who are struggling with high home heating expenses,” said WCAC Executive Director Marybeth Campbell. “We encourage anyone overwhelmed by expensive utility bills to reach out to our team for assistance and let us find a way to help you. We have many resources available to ensure local families are warm and safe this winter.”

Eligibility guidelines (snapshot of guidelines below) can be found at [www.heatinghelpma.org](http://www.heatinghelpma.org). It is important to note that eligibility is based on the last four weeks of gross income and that any additional stimulus funds or pandemic unemployment assistance funds do not count toward income.

Household Size	Gross Annual Income	4 Week Gross Income (if paid once per month)	4 Week Gross Income (if paid weekly or bi-weekly)
1	\$40,951	\$3,412	\$3,150
2	\$53,551	\$4,462	\$4,119
3	\$66,151	\$5,512	\$5,088
4	\$78,751	\$6,562	\$6,057
5	\$91,351	\$7,612	\$7,027
6	\$103,951	\$8,662	\$7,996
7	\$106,314	\$8,859	\$8,178
8	\$108,676	\$9,056	\$8,359

## **About MASSCAP**

The Massachusetts Association of Community Action's 23 private, non-profit human service and advocacy organizations work to administer key anti-poverty programs in every city and town in the Commonwealth. These organizations serve approximately 600,000 low-income people annually, more than half of them with incomes below 125% of the federal poverty level.

For more than 50 years, Community Action Agencies have been on the front lines of addressing poverty -- administering federal programs, federal community services and community development grants, and state funds. CAAs are economic engines in cities and towns across Massachusetts, providing communities with an annual infusion of over \$500 million in total resources. CAAs generate at least twice that amount helping clients become economically stable and mobile.

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