Contact:

Joe Diamond
Executive Director, MASSCAP
617.645.2949 or joediamond@masscap.org

Colleen Cullen
Director, Grants Management and Compliance, MASSCAP
617.735.5451 or colleencullen@masscap.org

MASSCAP, EOHLC, SMOC, Community Action Agencies, MEDA Host Heating Help Kickoff Amid Increased Need and Soaring Oil Prices

Healey/Driscoll Administration Boosts Assistance

Event recording: https://www.youtube.com/live/vSX2XoZ3LLE

Boston, MA – October 29, 2026 – Yesterday, the Massachusetts Association for Community Action (MASSCAP – www.masscap.org) and the South Middlesex Opportunity Council (SMOC), along with the Massachusetts Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities (EOHLC), the network of Community Action Agencies (CAAs) in Massachusetts, and the Massachusetts Energy Directors Association (MEDA), held a heating help awareness event highlighting the need for vulnerable Massachusetts households to stay safe, warm, and healthy this winter. The 70% increase in the cost of heating oil from last winter underscores the critical need for MA families. Households of all kinds may be eligible for help with their home winter heating bills, no matter the energy source.

Applications for home energy assistance are currently being accepted online, and income-eligible households may receive help through April 30, 2027. Both renters and homeowners are eligible for assistance. Applying is easy with the ability to apply online directly to the agency serving your town. The website www.heatinghelpMA.org (connected to the MASSCAP website) provides information for those in need of heating assistance as well as energy efficiency program information and a link to the online application portal, www.toapply.org/MassLIHEAP.

The event also celebrated the 50th anniversary of the federal Weatherization Assistance Program (WAP), which has served over 7.2 million families since the program began in 1976, and has helped participating households save an average of $372 or more annually, creating safer homes and increased stability.

Joe Diamond, Executive Director, MASSCAP explained, “Part of the legislation that created Community Action Agencies talks about the elimination of the paradox of poverty amidst plenty in this richest country in the world. Related to that mission is to ensure that vulnerable households stay warm, safe and healthy during a cold New England winter.”

Diamond continued, “Fuel Assistance, energy programs and WAP is part of the set of integrated services that we provide. This Fuel Assistance program is something that we are very proud of and it is marked by this very important partnership we have with the state. We work with them on a weekly basis in terms of implementing this program in ways that are good for the people that we serve. We also update our elected officials every year, and we are grateful for their support over the years.”

Home energy assistance is offered through the federal program (HEAP) that helps households making less than 60% of state median income to address home energy costs. And, in Massachusetts, Governor Healey recently announced a shift in state funding to expand eligibility for home heating assistance creating a new benefit for approximately 50,000 middle class households who rely on heating oil that previously did not qualify for assistance, as well as increasing heating assistance for approximately 156,000 low-income households as part of HEAP. The new initiative was created via Healey's declaration of a State of Energy Emergency and the subsequent creation of an Emergency Winter Warmth Fund, made possible by a partnership with Citizens Energy Corporation. The HEAP program is administered by EOHLC in partnership with community-based organizations, CAAs, and the City of Cambridge. Eligibility for HEAP is based on several factors, including household size and combined gross annual income of residents 18 and older. The program provides assistance for all sources of heat, including oil, electricity, natural gas, propane, kerosene, wood and coal. For example, a family of four, making up to $103,049 would be eligible for help. The Middle-Income Heating Oil Relief, however, provides one-time assistance to families earning more than $103,049 and up to $171,749. (See further details at https://www.mass.gov/orgs/home-energy-assistance-programs.)

Through related programs available with the same application there are home energy efficiency opportunities that 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.

Chris Kluchman, Undersecretary, Livable Communities division, EOHLC said, "This winter relief is available. No one should struggle without paying for home heating during the fall or winter." Kluchman went on to share, "In total this fall, the Healey/Driscoll administration is providing almost $50M in extra relief for Massachusetts households. Applications for HEAP are open right now. Applications for the one time assistance will open in December but interested families can join a waiting list." She went on to thank the network and recognize the work of all the deliverable fuel vendors, utility companies, and the local administrating agencies as well as MASSCAP.

"HEAP assistance is more critical this year than ever with the costs of housing and essential items out of reach for many, and the price for home heating continuing to climb," said Susan Gentili, President and CEO of South Middlesex Opportunity Council. "Now more than ever, this program is a lifeline for so many of our neighbors throughout the Commonwealth."

State Representative Priscila Sousa said, "We also have to realize that energy insecurity is an equity issue. Rising costs do not affect everyone equally. Seniors, families with young children, people with disabilities, people already struggling to make ends meet always carry the greatest burden…This work is not just about getting people through one winter. It is about investing in safer, healthier, more energy efficient homes for generations to come. Warmth is not a luxury. Safety is not a privilege. No one in Massachusetts should be left out in the cold."

"Energy should not only be better but should not be a barrier for people standing in the way of success and opportunity. The funding matters of course, but the programs matter, the people matter, the person answering the phone helping a senior complete an application or working with a family to find a way to keep warm. We are proud to stand alongside you in that effort" Joe Kennedy III, President, Citizens Energy told us.

Senator Ed Markey added in his video message, "I look forward to continuing to work aside all of you to continue to protect Massachusetts families so none of us are forced to choose between chills and bills, between heating and eating."

Action for Boston Community Development (ABCD) Director of Energy Services, Andrea Mendoza, spoke about the importance of HEAP and encouraged those who qualify to apply immediately, saying "Don't delay, apply today! HEAP is not too difficult to be worth it…it is now easier than ever to apply with online tools available 24/7, and local Community Action Agencies are here to help."

Eligibility guidelines (snapshot of guidelines below) can be found at 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	*$53,585*	*$4,465*	*$4,121*
2	*$70,073*	*$5,839*	*$5,390*
3	*$86,561*	*$7,213*	*$6,658*
4	*$103,049*	*$8,587*	*$7,926*
5	*$119,536*	*$9,961*	*$9,195*
6	*$136,024*	*$11,335*	*$10,463*

Gabe Espaillat, HEAP Program Director, SMOC, brought the words of Judith, a SMOC client from Shrewsbury who wrote them a thank you note. "Asking for help did not come easy, but from the first phone call, everyone treated me with such kindness and respect that the worries disappeared." Judith described the process of making the application as well as the great work of the weatherization crew who not only weatherized her house but took care with her things and explained what they were doing and why. She then said, "the drafts that used to chill me when sitting on my couch are gone and my house stays warm on even the coldest nights. Between the fuel assistance and the weatherization, I have not had to choose between paying for heat and buying my groceries or filling my prescriptions."

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 over 60 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 $1.2 million in total resources. CAAs generate at least twice that amount, helping clients become economically stable and mobile.

About the Massachusetts Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities

The Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities (EOHLC) was established in 2023 to create more homes and lower housing costs in every region. EOHLC also distributes funding to municipalities, oversees the state-aided public housing portfolio, and operates the state's EA family shelter.

EOHLC Press Contact: Elevate, HEAP@elevatecom.com.

//End