



Substitute House Bill No. 5426

Public Act No. 24-145

AN ACT CONCERNING ENERGY ASSISTANCE STUDIES AND FUEL VENDOR REIMBURSEMENT.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives in General Assembly convened:

Section 1. (*Effective from passage*) (a) The Commissioner of Social Services shall convene a working group to study best practices utilized in other states to fairly compensate deliverable fuel vendors participating in energy assistance programs while maintaining the maximum amount of funding to benefit recipients of such programs. The study shall include, but need not be limited to, the benefits and drawbacks of bulk state purchases of deliverable fuel for the state energy assistance program.

(b) The working group shall consist of: (1) A member of an organization representing deliverable fuel vendors in the state, (2) a representative of a community action agency that contracts with the commissioner to administer the state energy assistance program funded under the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Act of 1981, as amended from time to time, (3) a representative from the Department of Administrative Services, (4) an individual who represents the interests and financial concerns of recipients of energy assistance provided under the state energy assistance program, and (5) a representative from the Office of the Consumer Counsel.

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(c) Not later than January 31, 2025, the commissioner shall submit a report, in accordance with the provisions of section 11-4a of the general statutes, to the joint standing committees of the General Assembly having cognizance of matters relating to appropriations, energy and technology and human services on the results of the working group's study.

Sec. 2. (*Effective from passage*) The Commissioner of Social Services, in consultation with the Low Income Energy Advisory Board, established pursuant to section 16a-41b of the general statutes, shall study the feasibility of developing a common application and benefits portal for use by applicants for (1) low-income home energy assistance benefits administered pursuant to section 16a-41a of the general statutes, as amended by this act, and (2) Operation Fuel, Incorporated. Not later than July 1, 2025, the commissioner shall submit a report, in accordance with the provisions of section 11-4a of the general statutes, to the joint standing committees of the General Assembly having cognizance of matters relating to energy and technology and human services on the results of the study, including, but not limited to, costs and benefits of such common application and benefits portal.

Sec. 3. Subsection (b) of section 16a-41a of the 2024 supplement to the general statutes is repealed and the following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective July 1, 2024*):

(b) The Commissioner of Social Services shall implement a program to purchase deliverable fuel for low-income households participating in the Connecticut energy assistance program and the state-appropriated fuel assistance program. The commissioner shall ensure an adequate supply of vendors for the program by (1) establishing county and regional pricing standards for deliverable fuel, (2) reimbursing fuel providers based on the price of the fuel on the date of delivery, and (3) allowing a vendor to electronically submit an authorized fuel slip or invoice for payment. Commencing with the energy assistance program

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period beginning November 1, 2025, the commissioner shall ensure an adequate supply of vendors for the program by establishing new pricing standards for deliverable fuel that fairly compensate fuel vendors for costs incurred on fuel purchase and delivery while maintaining the maximum amount of funding to benefit recipients of the program. Not later than August 1, 2025, the commissioner shall include such pricing standards in the annual plan for the program required pursuant to subsection (a) of this section.