

PERMANENTLY LOWER HOME ENERGY BILLS

In order to permanently lower home energy bills, Governor Walz' budget proposes additional investment in the Weatherization Assistance Program, which will save money and save energy for up to 15,000 income-eligible Minnesotans by making their homes more energy-efficient and safer. The proposal permanently lowers home energy costs by 20-30% for Minnesotans who pay at least two times higher for energy bills than the average household. The Weatherization Assistance Program helps Minnesotans lower their energy bills in a permanent way, helps to curb the effects of climate change, and reduces demands on our state's overall energy infrastructure.

WHAT DOES THIS BILL DO?

These funds will address high heating fuel costs by offering permanent improvements that lower energy costs to income-eligible households throughout Minnesota, by removing barriers the program currently cannot address, and by stabilizing funding in order to build a robust and consistent workforce.

WHY IS THIS BILL IMPORTANT?

Children, elderly, and those with physical challenges are especially at risk of developing worsening health conditions when living in inadequately equipped or poorly maintained homes. Rates of asthma, COPD, cardiovascular disease - all chronic conditions on which the indoor environment is a factor - are more prevalent in low-income communities. Weatherization not only improves the comfort of the home, but it permanently reduces the energy burden of the household, can improve the health of vulnerable Minnesotans, particularly the elderly, and saves residents money over time.

In addition, when funding expands and contracts significantly, this has a negative impact on the dedicated contractors and service provider staff, causing layoffs, and negatively impacting long-term delivery of services. This bill addresses all of these issues, supporting a robust program with a one-time infusion of dollars into more income-eligible households throughout Minnesota.

HOW WILL MINNESOTANS BE BETTER OFF IF WE PASS THIS BILL?

This proposal builds on the already successful federally-funded Weatherization Assistance Program that reduces energy costs for income-eligible Minnesotans by providing one-time weatherization services such as the addition of storm windows, weather-stripping, adding insulation, replacing inefficient heating with higher efficiency and lower carbon heating sources, etc.

This proposal addresses all of the major limitations in the current program, including enabling more efficient lower-carbon fuel sources, assisting local service providers to reach "hard to reach" households, and expanding services in areas that have been traditionally limited by federal requirements.