



Illinois Department of Commerce & Economic Opportunity

JB Pritzker, Governor

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STATE OF ILLINOIS REMINDS RESIDENTS TO APPLY FOR \$200 MILLION IN UTILITY RELIEF AVAILABLE NOW FOR FAMILIES IN NEED

Governor Pritzker's Help Illinois Families Program Offers More Funding Per Household to Assist Low-Income Residents with Rising Costs this Season

CHICAGO—The Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (DCEO) today reminded residents of utility relief available to low-income families throughout the state. Through Governor Pritzker's Help Illinois Families program, DCEO has launched over \$295 million in utility assistance programming available for low-income households across the state and is accepting applications now through May 31, 2022, while funds remain.

Since the program first launched in September, over \$84 million in payments have been approved for 77,000 households through the Low-income Household Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP). Today, more than \$200 million remains available to help cover the cost of heating and energy bills, including expanded benefits provided this year from \$750 to \$1,000 in payments available, on average per household, allowing more assistance to Illinois families for utilities this season than ever before.

Additional funding to offset utility costs for low income families comes at a critical time, as customers are expected to face higher costs to heat their homes this season. Nearly half of all US households are expected to face higher costs on service this year, according to the Energy Information Association (EIA).

"While everyday household costs are increasing – we want Illinois families to know that help is available, and that they don't have to struggle alone," said **DCEO Deputy Director David Wortman**. "Thanks to Governor Pritzker's leadership – Illinois has significantly expanded utility assistance to reach more families in need, and to help alleviate the significant burdens facing our communities as a result of the pandemic. With state assistance more accessible than ever before, we encourage residents to act now and apply for this assistance today, while funds remain available."

The State of Illinois and partners at the Citizens Utility Board (CUB) are urging residents to take advantage of LIHEAP while funds remain available, and to avoid delaying payments on billing while

the annual shut-off moratorium is underway (Dec. 1 – March 31). To help residents take advantage of LIHEAP, the State and CUB are teaming up to host two free virtual events, in English and Spanish, to assist residents with applying for Help Illinois Families. These events will provide an overview of the program, as well as a live question and answer session allowing residents to get their questions answered in real-time.

"Home heating prices are skyrocketing, but we've got a message for Illinois families who have fallen on hard times: You can ease the financial pain of this winter," CUB Executive Director David Kolata said. "During the pandemic, Gov. Pritzker's Administration has made historic levels of assistance available for Illinois consumers struggling to afford their electric and natural gas bills, and it's our mission to get the word out. It's in everyone's best interest to keep seniors and families safe and connected to the utility service we all need."

More information on how to register for the free, community events can be found below. Both events will also be streamed live on Facebook.

- Nov 17 at 6pm – English, Registration: ([LINK](#))
or on Facebook live: [Facebook.com/CUBIllinois](https://www.facebook.com/CUBIllinois)
- Nov 18 at 6pm – Spanish, Registration: ([LINK](#))
or on Facebook live: [Facebook.com/CUBIllinois](https://www.facebook.com/CUBIllinois)

Launched in September of this year, the current 2021-2022 Help Illinois Families program year provides \$336 million in household assistance for low-income families – including \$295 million for LIHEAP utility bill assistance. Funded in large part by the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA), this year's FY 22 investment represents a record-level of funding available to help Illinois residents offset the costs of utility bills.

To address the burdens facing families during the pandemic, the Pritzker administration has worked to broaden access to community assistance programs by increasing funds available, expanding income thresholds, and providing flexibility so that undocumented families are eligible.

Households at 200% federal poverty level or below are income-eligible. Visit www.helpillinoisfamilies.com for additional information.

Utility relief made available during the current program year 2021-2022 builds on a record seen last year – with over \$343 million in assistance provided for 289,000 families statewide. This includes \$112 million deployed as part of the Utility Disconnection Avoidance Program, launched by the State of Illinois in collaboration with utility service providers, to grant relief for 121,000+ families facing shutoffs due to inability to pay during the early months of the pandemic.

To apply, please go to DCEO's website, helpillinoisfamilies.com, or contact the hotline service providing real-time assistance in over 30 languages at 1-833-711-0374.

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