

United States Senate
WASHINGTON, DC 20510

May 11, 2020

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Majority Leader
United States Senate
S-230, U.S. Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Charles Schumer
Minority Leader
United States Senate
S-220, U.S. Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20510

CC: Chairwoman Murkowski and Ranking Member Manchin

Dear Majority Leader McConnell and Minority Leader Schumer:

As Congress continues to work on economic stimulus legislation to address the consequences of the global COVID-19 pandemic, we urge you to leverage the Department of Energy's (DOE) Weatherization Assistance Program (WAP) to drive job creation and create equitable living environments by providing it with robust funding over a timeline of five years and making targeted statutory reforms to strengthen the program's job creation and project expansion abilities. For over 40 years, WAP has helped drive the federal government's energy efficiency strategy by facilitating upgrades in the homes of low income families that reduce their energy costs and stimulate job growth through community development.

Under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA), WAP received over \$5 billion and several permanent statutory reforms, including an increase in the allowable average cost per unit, expanded income eligibility for the program, an increase in funds for training and technical assistance, and a provision allowing homes to be reweatherized if they were serviced by WAP before 1994. Because of these strong investments, during the ARRA funding period, WAP weatherized over 1,000,000 homes and consistently ranked in the top 8 for full time job producers^{1,2}.

Despite this success, the rapid infusion and subsequent downsizing of funding after the 3-year timeframe of ARRA posed a challenge for administering the program. Over the past decade DOE has improved quality control and assurance practices for the program, but additional reforms are still needed to make the program as efficient and effective as possible. Addressing these much needed reforms is the intent of the *Weatherization Enhancement and Local Energy Efficiency Investment and Accountability Act of 2019* (S. 983/H.R.2041), which has strong bipartisan and bicameral support.

¹ <https://www.energy.gov/articles/eere-celebrates-completion-1-million-weatherized-american-homes>

² <https://nascsp.org/looking-back-at-arra-5-years-later/>

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For a package that is aimed at stimulating job growth and providing economic recovery assistance, the Weatherization Assistance Program is uniquely positioned to deliver tangible impacts through home retrofits and job creation. Building on lessons learned from ARRA³, strong funding and targeted policy provisions should be included to maximize the effectiveness of WAP and its long-term contribution to rebuilding the economy.

A future stimulus should provide DOE's Weatherization Assistance Program with:

- **Robust funding to be made available through Sept 30, 2025:** Rather than a short-term infusion of funds, the WAP network should be allowed to administer stimulus funds over the course of five years, to allow for a sustained ramp-up of the program over time.
- **Dedicated funding set aside for building new training centers:** All but one of the 21 WAP training centers were created using ARRA funds. Dedicating funds to build new training centers will allow for rapid deployment of new WAP jobs.
- **Dedicated funding given directly to states and localities for flexible investments in new weatherization projects:** Allow states to fund new projects that complement WAP's core objective, such as re-roofing, treating water damage, providing assistance to rooftop and community solar initiatives, and aiding heat pump installation.

Targeted adjustments to the WAP statute to enhance job creation and expedite project deployment timelines: This includes expanding training eligibility to private contractors implementing WAP projects, increasing the percentage of allowable funds for administrative purposes, updating the timeline for reweatherization, and increasing caps for allowable expenditures on individual projects. These items are included in the *Weatherization Enhancement and Local Energy Efficiency Investment and Accountability Act* (S.983/ H.R.2041) or were successful strategies during the ARRA period.

Thank you for your attention to and consideration of our request. If you have further questions, please do not hesitate to contact our staff. We look forward to working with you to maximize the potential of the Weatherization Assistance Program.

Sincerely,

/s/ Christopher A. Coons

Christopher A. Coons
United States Senator

/s/ Susan Collins

Susan M. Collins
United States Senator

³ <https://www.energy.gov/sites/prod/files/2015/09/f26/weatherization-works-II-ARRA-period-eval.pdf>

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/s/ Jack Reed

Jack Reed
United States Senator

/s/ Jeanne Shaheen

Jeanne Shaheen
United States Senator