FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
6/15/2020

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Gov. Pritzker Announces $275 Million In Emergency Relief for Households Impacted by COVID-19

State Invests Additional $90 Million, Expands Eligibility to Help Illinoisans with Rent, Utilities and other Household Payments through LIHEAP and CSBG

Belleville, Ill. – Governor JB Pritzker and the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (DCEO) announced $275 million in funding for the Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) and Community Services Block Grant (CSBG) programs. This funding includes an additional $90 million allocated via the CARES Act, allowing the state to increase eligibility for these programs to 1 million income-qualified Illinoisans.

Effective immediately, eligible Illinois residents and families can apply to receive assistance with food, rent, utilities, temporary shelter, medicine and other essential household services. To learn more about these expanded offerings and to fill out new remote applications made live today, visit www.helpillinoisfamilies.com (http://www.helpillinoisfamilies.com/).

"The work to build a state that serves all its people – no matter who they are or what part of Illinois they call home – is more important than ever as we seek to restore our economy while continuing to prioritize our collective health," **said Governor JB Pritzker.** "This additional funding for our Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program and our Community Services Block Grant program allows us to provide even more support for things like rent, food, temporary shelter, utility bills and other essential services to qualifying low-income households who need emergency assistance. Under this $275 million program, 3.5 million Illinoisans are eligible for hundreds of dollars in relief."

With the passage of the State's FY21 budget, an additional $90 million in federal CARES Act funding will be allocated for community assistance programming, making way for a total $275 million investment that will help families impacted by the crisis. To provide additional relief for families in the face of COVID-19, the Governor's budget also increases the eligibility income threshold up to 200 percent of federal poverty level.

"COVID 19 has not only resulted in an ur
extraordinary economic crisis as well – c
said Acting Director of DCEO Michael N
CSBG programs will help many more inc
help they can get back on t

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To connect Illinoisans with expanded program offerings, DCEO has launched a new remote application process that will provide applicants the option to begin the intake process online or over the phone with the assistance of a live agent. The State's new website and call center will be accessible for all residents – with assistance provided in English and Spanish, and other languages assisted through translation. By eliminating the requirement to apply in person, income-eligible applicants can swiftly proceed through the application process from the safety of their own home.

Applicants will be served on a first-come, first-served basis until funding is exhausted. In the coming weeks, DCEO will partner with its network of 35 statewide Community Action Agencies (CAAs) to conduct outreach to high-need communities to let them know about this critical funding available, and to inform them of easy steps they can take to apply immediately.

"Crosswalk staff is excited to implement this new and innovative system to assist our customers," **said Debra Jackanicz Executive Director, Crosswalk Community Action Agency.** "During these unprecedented times, it is a must that we all think outside the box to ensure that those affected by COVID-19 are assisted as quickly as possible. Eliminating as much financial burden as possible and restoring quality of life is the heart of Community Action Agency."

Qualifying participants could receive hundreds of dollars in relief support. Last year, the average household qualifying for LIHEAP received $600 in assistance. Expanded eligibility for CSBG takes effect immediately. New LIHEAP eligibility will come online at the end of July, residents can still apply for 2020 programming through June 30.

"St. Clair County is committed to helping individuals and families in crisis get the support they need with state assistance programs," **said St. Clair County Board Chairman Mark Kern.** "Our county, like others around the state, continues to receive an extraordinary number of applications for assistance as a result of this pandemic. We thank Governor Pritzker for prioritizing the expansion of these programs which will provide more resources for more families during this time of need."

To expedite application reviews, DCEO will work with CAAs and local agencies to verify income and eligibility documentation. Eligibility will be determined by a number of factors, such as household size and the applicant's ability to verify documentation. While the State typically disburses community assistance funds in a matter of weeks, turnaround time under the expanded "Help Illinois Families" initiative may be extended due to the volume of applications received.

Residents who believe they may be eligible are encouraged to visit the website and follow easy steps to apply immediately. The State is reminding app ing, depending on type of assistance being s

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• Proof of employment (paystubs) for the head of the household for the last 30 days.
• Copy of current heat and electric bills issued within the last 30 days (if they pay for their energy directly).
• Copy of their rental agreement (if they are renting) showing that utilities are not included, the monthly rental amount and landlord contact information.
• Proof of Social Security numbers for all household members.

"Older adults across Illinois have been hit especially hard by the health and economic impacts of COVID-19," **said Bob Gallo, state director for AARP Illinois.** "On behalf of our 1.7 million members, we commend state and community leaders for recognizing the need to provide a crucial safety net to older adults, so that they can worry a little less about falling behind on utility, rent and other essential expenses and continue to focus on their health and safety."

DCEO's Office of Community Assistance manages three federal programs; LIHEAP, CSBG and the Illinois Home Weatherization Assistance Program (IHWAP). Last year alone, these programs served more than 350,000 households, with CSBG providing more than 400,000 services and LIHEAP providing utility bill assistance to approximately 250,000 households.

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