



Statement from Jennifer Gremmert, Executive Director of Energy Outreach Colorado

June 2, 2020

The outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, and the resulting response efforts have disproportionately impacted Colorado's vulnerable population. Through no fault of their own, many people have been hit especially hard in this time of crisis as they are finding themselves unemployed, underemployed, or unable to find new work all while having little to no savings while still having the same expenses. This segment of the population – which has grown to a staggering number - now qualify as low-income

Following State requirements, households have been under stay-at-home orders, home schooling their children, and struggling to keep their energy use to a minimum. Despite their best efforts, the additional energy use will contribute to an increase in their utility bills and as warmer weather arrives, these costs will continue to rise as families attempt to cool their homes.

The Governor's Executive Order putting a moratoria on utility disconnections and collection of late payment fees was an important step in protecting Colorado's utility customers during this critical time. As those moratoria end, we know that Colorado utilities will work closely with those customers challenged to pay those past bills but significant arrears have built up.

I ask for your support by directing \$10M of the CARES Act \$ allocated to Colorado to be used by Energy Outreach Colorado for utility bill assistance and to specifically target the arrears of those low-income customers impacted by COVID 19.

About Energy Outreach Colorado (EOC):

- Established in 1989 by legislation to increase private support for energy assistance.
- Public/Private partnership working closely with Colorado Department of Human Services (DHS) Low-income Energy Assistance Program (LEAP), the Colorado Energy Office (CEO) Weatherization Program and all utilities across the state to deliver energy bill payment, energy efficiency and energy education programs to low-income Colorado families.
- Statewide distribution network of emergency assistance organizations
 - Established partners in every county
 - Mostly faith-based;
 - Combined with other nonprofit services like food and rent assistance; and
 - Centralized database to collect data.
- Focus on fiscal responsibility and transparency
 - Very low-administrative costs;
 - Accredited by the Better Business Bureau and highly ranked by Charity Navigator;
 - Strong board of directors;
 - Information posted on our website includes:
 - Past four years of independent financial audits

- Past four years of IRS form 990 filing
- Past four years of Annual Reports to the General Assembly

Here are some key points about HB 20 -XXX:

- EOC will use our existing statewide energy assistance distribution system of local community emergency assistance partners.
- While LEAP has been extended to August 31st, there are many Colorado families that are not eligible for LEAP that still need support. We are working closely together with LEAP and CEO to maximize the benefits for all Colorado households in need. With this funding we will also be able to continue assisting families in September and October when LEAP is closed.
- Customers impacted by COVID 19 from all counties and utilities will be eligible for support.
- 100% of funds will be used for energy assistance, applied as credits to utility bills. EOC will use other funding for administrative support.
- Funds will be spent by December 30, 2020 and a report on the distribution of all funds will be available by county and vendor.
- Recipients will also be informed of energy efficiency offerings and energy saving tips to help support energy conservation.