

The Emergency Winter Energy Relief Plan

Totaling \$474 million – which is funded through \$283 million in new revenues recently forecasted by the Revenue Forecasting Committee, \$157 million in General Funds that are newly-available as the result of continued enhanced Federal funding from the COVID-19 public health emergency, and \$34 million in fund balance from the 130th Legislature – the Emergency Winter Energy Relief Plan is comprised of four primary measures:

1. **Emergency Energy Relief Payment:** \$398 million to fund a one-time \$450 energy relief payment to an estimated 880,000 eligible Maine people, amounting to \$900 in relief for the average Maine family.

Recipients will have filed a 2021 Maine individual income tax return as a full-time resident and not be claimed as an independent on another's tax return. Eligible Maine people will have a Federal adjusted gross income (FAGI) of less than: \$100,000 if filing single, if married and filing separately; \$150,000 if filing as head of household; or \$200,000 for couples filing jointly.

Eligible Maine people do not need to take any action to receive the payment. If the Legislature enacts the Plan as an emergency measure, the Mills Administration expects the payments to be distributed beginning in mid-January 2023.

2. **Home Energy Assistance Program (HEAP) Supplement:** \$40 million to supplement the Home Energy Assistance Program, a Federal program administered by MaineHousing through local Maine Community Action Partnerships (CAPs) that helps qualified homeowners and renters pay for heating costs, including fuel and emergency fuel delivery.

The supplemental funding, which nearly doubles the amount of existing Federal funding, will allow MaineHousing to provide HEAP recipients a financial benefit equal to last year's benefit. Without this supplemental funding, households would receive, on average, just half the heating fuel or equivalent benefit given the increased price of energy. Benefits are paid directly to heating fuel providers.

This builds on Governor Mills' successful effort to press Federal officials to provide more funding for HEAP. In July, [the Governor wrote to the Biden Administration](#) urging an increase in HEAP funding and the Administration did include additional funding in its proposal. She also [joined her fellow New England governors](#) to urge Congressional leaders to prioritize additional supplemental HEAP funds.

3. **Emergency Home Heating Oil:** \$10 million to Maine Community Action Partnerships to help them deliver emergency fuel assistance to prevent people and families from running out of heating fuel and experiencing a heating crisis. With this supplemental funding, it is estimated that 12,500 homes may be eligible for up to \$800 in emergency funds to avert a heating crisis.

4. **Short-Term Housing Support:** \$21 million to bolster the Emergency Housing Relief Fund created by Governor Mills and the Legislature earlier this year that supports emergency housing and emergency shelters to prevent people from experiencing homelessness this winter. Governor Mills and the Legislature had capitalized the fund with \$22 million earlier this year.

With the end of the Federal Emergency Rental Assistance program on December 31, without possibility of extension, this funding will offer vital, temporary support for individuals and families who may otherwise be at great risk of experiencing homelessness once the program ends. Specifically, these funds will be used to extend housing supports between December and April to individuals and families; expand support for shelters and other efforts to help individuals and families experiencing homelessness; and help establish warming centers in communities around Maine to ensure people and families have a safe, warm place in the cold months ahead.

The plan also completes the nation-leading \$850 inflation relief checks delivered by Governor Mills and the Legislature earlier this year by providing \$4.4 million in additional funding to finish the distribution of the checks to 22,000 more Maine people than originally estimated. In total, the program will send \$850 checks to nearly 880,000 Maine people, surpassing the original estimate of 858,000 people.

The package also reestablishes in State law a process by which the Department of Environmental Protection can waive fuel sulfur limitations if necessary to protect public health, safety or welfare.