

STUDY RELEASED: Public advocate wants efficient energy help to low-income families (1 attachment)

MEDIA CONTACT: Barry Hobbins, 207-624-3687, Barry.Hobbins@maine.gov

(Augusta, Maine) The Office of the Public Advocate (OPA) has released a new study intended to improve state-supported programs that help low-income residents increase energy efficiency in their homes.

In partnership with Efficiency Maine Trust, the OPA commissioned the “Maine Low-Income Household Energy Efficiency Baseline Study” to identify opportunities for low-income Maine residents to make maximum use of energy efficiency assistance.

“It is crucial to understand exactly how these families use energy, and eliminate as much guesswork as possible,” said Barry Hobbins, Maine’s public advocate. “Programs to cut energy costs for low-income families are indispensable, but dollar for dollar we need to get the biggest possible return for the taxpayers. If we’re trying to cut energy costs, let’s make sure we’re cutting to the maximum degree possible.”

According to the Maine Department of Health and Human Services, there are 175,924 low-income households in Maine. Conducted by GDS Associates, the study analyzed energy-related data in 68 low-income homes across Maine. It collected comprehensive data about insulation in homes, as well as energy end uses, including space heaters, space cooling, water heating, lighting, appliances and other “plug loads.” The sample of households studied was randomly selected from the almost 40,000 participants in Maine’s Low-Income Heating Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP).

The study concluded with several specific findings and recommendations. As one example, 38% of interior sockets and 35% of all exterior sockets in low-income homes contain incandescent and three-way incandescent bulbs. Only 24% of interior sockets and 22% of exterior sockets contain LED bulbs. That presents a clear opportunity to install a greater number of LED bulbs in low-income households.

“It’s a great roadmap,” Hobbins said of the study’s recommendations.

A PDF copy of the study is attached to this press release. Citizens may download the study by visiting: www.maine.gov/meopa.

In pursuit of affordable, high quality utility services, the Office of the Public Advocate represents Maine utility consumers in any matter reviewed by the Public Utilities Commission, as well as in proceedings before state and federal agencies and courts. For additional information, please contact the Office of the Public Advocate by phone at 207-624-3687 or via email at opa@maine.gov.