

VIRGINIA ACTS OF ASSEMBLY -- 1996 SESSION

CHAPTER 495

An Act to require the Department of Social Services, or any other agency succeeding in pertinent authority, to allocate federal low-income fuel assistance program funding to low-income weatherization assistance programs.

[H 675]

Approved April 1, 1996

Whereas, the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP), a federally funded program administered by the Department of Social Services (DSS), provides short-term home heating fuel assistance to low-income individuals; and

Whereas, during program year 1994-1995 DSS paid out more than \$21 million in LIHEAP benefits, and the average benefit paid per household was \$181; and

Whereas, the Weatherization Assistance Program (WAP), administered by the Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD) and principally funded by the U.S. Department of Energy, is designed to reduce the energy costs of low-income households by weatherizing homes and providing essential repairs to heating systems; and

Whereas, WAP's statewide budget in 1994-1995 was \$4.7 million, and a budget of \$3.5 million is projected in 1995-1996 due to declining federal funding for WAP; and

Whereas, for the past two years general fund appropriations have been necessary to keep the program operational statewide, a condition necessary to qualify for federal funding; and

Whereas, WAP and LIHEAP should be better coordinated to ensure that individuals and families eligible for fuel assistance benefits have weatherized homes and heating systems in good repair to help reduce each home's heating costs while freeing up fuel assistance dollars for other eligible program participants; and

Whereas, Federal LIHEAP regulations permit up to 15 percent of states' LIHEAP grants to be spent on weatherization, and an additional 10 percent may be spent on weatherization upon application to and approval by the program's federal administrators; now, therefore,

Be it enacted by the General Assembly of Virginia:

1. *§1. That the Department of Social Services, or any other agency succeeding in pertinent authority, is directed to allocate at least 7.5 percent of all federal low-income fuel assistance program funding made available to the Commonwealth to low-income weatherization assistance programs, to the extent such allocation is permitted by federal law.*