

Statement on S.219

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NETO is one of six (6) organizations providing no cost weatherization services to low-income Vermonters. Our clients first work with an Intake Coordinator to apply for the program and provide proof of income to ensure they qualify. We follow strict rules from the State and Department of Energy on how to approve an applicant. The next step in the process is a visit from an Energy Coach. The purpose of this visit is to look at the energy usage in the home and coach the client on steps they can take to be more energy efficient. Coaches are able to look to possibly upgrade refrigerators, washing machines, freezers, dehumidifiers, lightbulbs, showerheads and, starting again this year, air conditioners. The criteria that allows these upgrade/replacements changes annually and is communicated from EVT to the WAP agencies. There is not a cut and dry answer as to whether an appliance can be replaced.

While Energy Coaches are at the house, they are also looking to see if there are any issues with the home that would make it ineligible for weatherization. Much like the appliance replacement, the criteria that we use to move forward or defer a home for free weatherization is not always straight forward. What we can and cannot do to remove barriers for weatherization is dependent on available funding and other factors.

The next step is a full Energy Audit by a qualified Energy Auditor. They are the ones who fully inspect and measure the home to identify the areas that can be improved through weatherization. They perform a Blower Door test, test the Heating System for safety and efficiency and write up the scope of work to show how we can weatherize the home.

Any program that aims to assist low-income Vermonters with improving efficiency and weatherization is going to be circumventing the WAP program. With as many moving parts and changing criteria as our program has due to changes in Washington and funding,

parties outside the WAP group would simply be complicating the situation and extending the time it takes to provide assistance.

When clients do not qualify for our program we will direct them to Efficiency Vermont to look for available Weatherization rebates. Homeowners will also be directed to Heat Squad Energy Auditors (a program of Cornerstone Housing Partners) that has BPI-certified Home Performance with Energy Star auditors who will provide audits at a cost of \$75-\$300 depending on income. I'm not sure where the Energy Navigators would fit in with that process either as there are already clear options available for households that are mid-high income.

Should the House decide to move forward with S.219, I would want the scope of the Navigator to be more well defined and would question any need for more involvement with low-income Vermonters beyond directing them to their local WAP/Community Action Organization. It is my opinion that state funds would be better utilized to communicate and improve existing programs rather than introduce more layers to the process.