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Commission Agenda Report

Commission Meeting Date: November 1, 2016

Prepared By: Vice Mayor Roxanna Ross

Title / Subject: Supporting Adequate Funding for Low Income Home Energy Assistance (LIHEAP)

Background:

At the MDCLC Best Practices Conference held October 14, one of the speakers was Former State Representative Joe Gibbons, who spoke on behalf of the Luncheon Sponsor FPL and asked the municipalities to provide a Resolution Supporting Adequate Funding of the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP). A draft resolution was provided by MDCLC Executive Director Richard Kuper. I have taken the liberty of revising that draft resolution with some of the details expressed in a similar resolution approved by the Miami Dade County Board of County Commission late last year. Both the draft and the County's version of the resolution are attached for reference.

The County's website indicates that: "The program is funded through the Florida Department of Community Affairs Division of Housing and Community Development, and provides assistance to over 50,000 households annually." The site also provides details of the application process at <http://www.miamidade.gov/socialservices/housing-assistance-energy.asp>

Fiscal / Budget Impact:

Negligible, if any, related to finalizing the resolution and electronic distribution of same.

Recommendation:

Support restored funding of LIHEAP and funding allocation as prescribed by Congress in the enabling law so that Florida receives its equitable share. In addition to distribution of the approved resolution as provided therein, forward a copy to Ms. Aletha Player, Area Manager, FPL External Affairs, 4200 W. Flagler St, Miami, FL 33134 / Aletha.Player@fpl.com.

Attachments:

Proposed resolution; original proposal as provided by MDCLC; County 2016 resolution.

***Resolution Supporting Adequate Funding of
the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP)***

WHEREAS, *the ENTITY NAME* recognizes basic energy services to be a vital key to the health, safety and well-being of Florida households and families; *and*

WHEREAS, poverty, unemployment and the slow economic recovery remain persistent national problems for many, and most especially, low-income households; *and*

WHEREAS, low-income families in Florida must disproportionately spend about three times more of their income on basic energy services than middle-income families do; *and*

WHEREAS, homes in low-income and minority communities severely lack energy efficiency features that can reduce energy consumption; *and*

WHEREAS, LIHEAP can provide vital heating, cooling and efficiency assistance to low-income households, including working-poor families, senior citizens, persons with disabilities and veterans; *and*

WHEREAS, the severe constraints on state and local budgets and the increased strain on the nation's support system provided by nonprofit, faith-based and charitable community organizations have reduced other resources available for energy assistance; *and*

WHEREAS, the primary Federal program providing assistance to low-income households to support their heating and cooling needs is the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP); *and*

WHEREAS, LIHEAP is not an entitlement, but rather a limited block grant program which provides flexible Federal-State partnerships to prevent service terminations during cold and hot weather emergencies; to make the transition from public assistance to economic self-reliance; to help low-income households remain economically self-sufficient; *and*

WHEREAS, federal LIHEAP funding has declined from \$5.1 billion in 2010 and is currently \$3.4 billion in 2016; *and*

WHEREAS, due to this limited funding, less than 125,000 Florida households received LIHEAP assistance in 2014, or less than ten percent of the State's eligible households; *and*

WHEREAS, due to this limited funding, the National Energy Assistance Directors Association has reported that many low-income families "will have few choices but to cut back on essential necessities, such as medicine, food, and clothing"; *and*

WHEREAS, The National Energy and Utility Affordability Coalition (NEUAC) and other concerned national organizations support restoring LIHEAP funding to at least \$4.7 billion in federal fiscal year 2017; *and*

WHEREAS, another impactful solution to increase Florida’s share of funding, without increasing the overall federal LIHEAP budget, is for Congressional Appropriators to simply “follow LIHEAP’s enabling law” – the precise allocation formula actually prescribed by Congress. Florida and many other states in great need would see a meaningful increase in their share of LIHEAP funds, as the Program’s enabling law calibrates for the dangers of both extreme heat and cold. It also adjusts funding for changing energy costs, demographics and poverty. In fact, the Congressional Research Service’s latest (June 25, 2015) estimate confirmed that Florida would receive an additional \$38.5 million in LIHEAP funding - a 55 percent improvement - if appropriations were to simply adhere to LIHEAP’s lawfully-enacted enabling law, even if the Program were simply to be level funded;

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that *the ENTITY NAME* urges the Appropriations Committee of the United States Senate and House of Representatives to both fully follow LIHEAP’s enabling law when determining all future appropriations, and to restore LIHEAP funding to its historic levels.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that a copy of this resolution be sent to all members of Congress, seeking their support for continued and fair funding for this life-saving Program.

Adopted effective date by the ENTITY NAME, CITY AND STATE

Signed:

the ENTITY NAME

OFFICERS OF THE ENTITY