

House Finance

HB21-1105 Low-income Util Payment Assistance Contributions

Typed Text of Testimony Submitted

Name, Position, Representing	Typed Text of Testimony
<p>SaraJo Light</p> <p>For</p> <p>Colorado Sierra Club</p>	<p>Good afternoon Chair Bird and Committee Members,</p> <p>My name is Sara Jo Light, I'm the Co-Chair of the Colorado Sierra Club and represent our 100,000 members and supporters in asking for your support of HB21-1105.</p> <p>We recognize that paying utility bills is difficult for many of our low-income residents and applaud this bill's efforts to help. It's also important that this bill addresses installing energy retrofits for low-income households in a manner that prioritizes customer savings, emission reductions and improving indoor air quality.</p> <p>By voting to support 1105, you will be helping those who need your help the most and enabling them to live with lower utility costs and healthier environments.</p> <p>Thank you,</p> <p>Sara Jo Light</p>
<p>George Twigg</p> <p>For</p> <p>Boulder County</p>	<p>Boulder County supports HB 21-1105.</p>




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LEAGUE

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Madam Chair and members of the House Finance Committee,

The Colorado Municipal League is submitting this written testimony in support of House Bill 21-1105. The Colorado Municipal League represents 270 of Colorado's 272 towns and cities. We want to thank Representative Kennedy and Senator Hansen for bringing it forward.

House bill 1105 allows an option for our municipal water utilities who may want to provide their customers with the ability to contribute to a program to help members in their own community who are struggling to keep up with their utility bills. We appreciate that this program is optional for water utilities and does not supersede programs that water utilities may already have in place for their customers either in house or through third party non-profits. Having these options available to utilities allows them to be involved with the program in the way that best fits the needs of their own communities.

For some smaller municipalities do not have the bandwidth in terms of staff time, or they have other limiting factors to be able to facilitate this type of a program on their own. Having this option means that they can provide these benefits to their members.

We do appreciate that this bill preserves local governments water and municipal utilities local control around how they finance these programs for their customers.

Sincerely,

Heather Stauffer
Legislative and Policy Advocate
Colorado Municipal League
1144 Sherman Street
Denver, CO 80203

For more information contact Heather Stauffer at 303-831-6411 or hstauffer@cml.org

March 8, 2021

Honorable Shannon Bird, Chair
Honorable Members of the Finance Committee
200 E. Colfax Ave.
Denver, CO 80203

RE: HB21-1105 Low-income Utility Payment Assistance Contributions

Dear Representative Bird and Members of the Finance Committee:

We, the undersigned, are writing to express our support for HB21-1105: Low-income Utility Payment Assistance Contributions. Our organizations are partners and participants in programs funded by Energy Outreach Colorado (“EOC”) that serve our local communities. EOC works with our agencies and provides energy assistance payments, weatherization, and efficiency services to low-income Coloradans, low-income multifamily buildings, and nonprofits through a variety of programs in every county of Colorado.

In light of the widespread and devastating impacts that COVID-19 has had on Colorado and its residents, the number of households needing assistance has never been greater. This chance to secure funding for the Colorado households and families with the greatest need is extremely important. Passage of this bill will bring greater opportunities for our agencies to provide continued and greater services to the communities we are. Additionally, HB21-1105 not only has the opportunity to deliver these opportunities soon, but also secures them for the future to guarantee there will be funding and support for all of the important programs we are able to deliver with our partners at EOC.

For the reasons above and all of the benefits to Colorado households that HB21-1105 will deliver to those in the most need, we urge you to vote yes on HB21-1105 and help secure the future for energy security in the State of Colorado.

Sincerely,

Ashley Dunn
Executive Director
Almost Home, Inc.

Emily Olsen
Executive Director
Cloud City Conservation Center

Cindy Larsen
HUD Certified Housing Counselor
Brothers Redevelopment, Inc.

Dennia Smith
IMT
Crowley County Department of Human
Services

Andrea Jung
TANF Specialist
Center for Work Education and
Employment

Rachel Saylor
Energy Assistance Coordinator
Evergreen Christian Outreach

Chanell R. Reed
Executive Director
Families Forward Resource Center

Marie Voth
FMC Administrator
First Mennonite Church Denver

Sr. Karen Bland
Executive Director
Grand Valley Catholic Outreach

Dan Marlow
Executive Director
Help & Hope Center

Elizabeth Salking
Executive Director
Housing Solutions for the Southwest

Sandra Blythe-Perry
Executive Director
Integrated Family Community Services

Janet Clark
Office Administrator
La Junta Associated Charities

Inez Robinson
Chief Executive Officer
Lupus Foundation of Colorado

Gete Mekonnen
Executive Director
Northeast Denver Housing Center

Rudolph "Rudy" Gonzales
Executive Director
Servicios de La Raza

Suzanne Crawford
Chief Executive Officer
Sister Carmen Community Center

Steve Loftis
Executive Director
Society of St Vincent de Paul, Denver Metro
Council

Christine Carr
Grants Officer
The Action Center

Sarah Dillon
Executive Director
Tri-County Family Care Center



Founded in 1991, the AFDC Coalition is a network to educate, strategize, lobby, support and to inform all Coalition members regarding issues which impact low-income families. We promote public policy to improve the lives of all Coloradans living in poverty.

March 8, 2021

Dear Members of the House Finance Committee,

My name is Laurie Harvey and I am on the Executive Committee for the All Families Deserve a Chance Coalition. I respectfully ask you to vote yes on HB21-1105 and approve amendment L-003 to create a fund under the Department of Human Services to receive transfers that will be used to pay a \$20.01 annual supplemental utility assistance payment to SNAP recipients.

As a former nonprofit executive and community leader dedicated to improving the lives of Coloradans living in poverty, I have seen firsthand the positive impacts that putting more funds in the pockets of families receiving SNAP can have on the wellbeing of parents and children who are striving for self-sufficiency. SNAP is a critical benefit that enables many low-income Coloradans to access the food that their families need and deserve, but does not stretch recipients' tight budgets enough to ensure total food security. Throughout my career, I encountered many working parents who often had to make the impossible choice to skip meals to ensure their kids had enough to eat. HB21-1105 will provide much needed funds for utility assistance for Coloradans who need more support now more than ever; and amendment L-003 will further help target assistance to SNAP recipients for whom an additional \$90 a month in SNAP benefits will help relieve financial stress and have a significant positive impact on their ability to provide necessary nutrition for themselves and their families.

This bill and amendment are important steps towards mitigating the vicious cycle of structural oppression that disproportionately prevents low-income Coloradans, people of color, and people with disabilities from providing for their basic necessities. At least 14 states across the country have already implemented "Heat and Eat" programs to leverage utility assistance to increase SNAP benefit amounts and advance food security for community members most in need. Investing in SNAP is not only positive for recipients, but for Colorado's communities and economy--studies consistently show that SNAP dollars are spent immediately in local



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economies. As Colorado recovers from the fallout of the pandemic, HB21-1105 and amendment L-003 are an important investment in rebuilding an economy in which low-income Coloradans are ever closer to providing for their basic needs and achieving self-sufficiency.

No Coloradan should ever have to worry about where their next meal will come from or if they will be able to keep their water, lights, and heat on. Please support HB21-1105 and amendment L-003 to take an important step forward to ensure all Coloradans are able to access basic necessities like utilities and food.

Respectfully,

Laurie Harvey

The AFDC Coalition