



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: April 3, 2019

CONTACT: Sean Coit at 202-224-5042 or Sean_Coit@coons.senate.gov

Sens. Coons, Collins, Reed, Shaheen re-introduce bipartisan bill to enhance and extend landmark energy efficiency program

The Weatherization Assistance Program has been the heart of the federal government's energy efficiency strategy for more than 40 years

WASHINGTON – U.S. Senators Chris Coons (D-Del.), Susan Collins (R-Maine), Jack Reed (D-R.I.), and Jeanne Shaheen (D-N.H.) re-introduced bipartisan legislation to strengthen and reauthorize the heart of the federal government's energy efficiency strategy—the Weatherization Assistance Program (WAP). The *Weatherization Enhancement and Local Energy Efficiency Investment and Accountability Act of 2019* would reauthorize the program through 2024. A companion bill is being led in the House by U.S. Representatives Paul Tonko (D-N.Y.), Bobby Rush (D-Ill.), and Marcy Kaptur (D-Ohio).

“Saving energy is the first step to reducing our energy costs and increasing our nation's energy security,” **said Senator Coons**. “The Weatherization Assistance Program allows millions of Americans to reap the benefits of a wide range of energy-efficient technologies and practices. This bill will not only ensure that this landmark program can continue to help make American homes safer, healthier, and more energy efficient, it also further enhances the program by creating a new competitive grant for innovation. This is commonsense, bipartisan legislation that I hope will once again earn strong support in the Senate.”

“Access to affordable home energy during the cold winter months is a matter of health and safety for many low-income households, children, and seniors in Maine and across the country, which is why I support reauthorizing the Weatherization Assistance Program,” **said Senator Collins**. “Weatherization is a cost-effective way to reduce energy usage and cut low-income homeowners' energy bills for the long-term. I encourage my colleagues to support this legislation that would reauthorize this important program and establish a new, innovative pilot program to help make homes ‘weatherization-ready’ and support cost saving practices.”

“Americans want energy that's affordable and doesn't cause climate change. Weatherization funding is just that. It's a smart way to lower costs, cut polluting fossil fuels, and strengthen our economy,” **said Senator Reed**.

“Weatherization projects are among the most effective ways to conserve energy, create jobs and lower costs for New Hampshire families,” **said Senator Shaheen**. “The Weatherization Assistance Program has helped low-income families, seniors and individuals with disabilities

throughout the state make lasting and cost-effective energy efficiency improvements to their homes. This is a proven program and Congress should act on our bipartisan proposal to reauthorize it immediately and see that its funds are used without delay.”

“America’s weatherization program is more than just a smart investment in energy efficiency that saves money for low-income individuals and families,” **said Congressman Tonko**. “A strong and active weatherization program also makes our families and communities safer, reduces climate pollution and supports thousands of local jobs. I urge my colleagues to advance this common-sense legislation immediately on behalf of our nation’s future and our constituents who need it most.”

For over 40 years, the WAP has assisted low-income families that lack the resources to make their homes more energy efficient. It supports 8,500 jobs and is responsible for energy efficiency upgrades in millions of homes across the country. For every dollar invested by the WAP, \$4.50 is generated in combined energy savings and non-energy benefits such as local economic growth.

The *Weatherization Enhancement and Local Energy Efficiency Investment and Accountability Act of 2019* would:

- Reauthorize and extend the WAP through 2024;
- Facilitate the use of renewable energy technologies in weatherization projects;
- Allow DOE to take health and safety benefits into account when carrying out the program;
- Ensure best practices and training among WAP contractors;
- Create a competitive innovation grant program for non-profits that have a track record of success to access the WAP;
- Allow homes to be reweatherized once 15 years have elapsed since the last weatherization and clarify that related services, such as education, installation evaluations, or non-Federally funded services, may be provided at any time; and
- Encourage DOE to provide maximum flexibility when WAP funding is being used to leverage additional private sector funding.

David Bradley, CEO of the National Community Action Foundation, which represents the nationwide network of Community Action Agencies that serve as local WAP providers, said: "Because of Senator Coons’ and Congressman Tonko’s leadership, Weatherization, a bipartisan policy with a real impact on families' health and safety during the coldest months of winter and warmest months of summer, a policy that lowers everyone's household energy bills, will have a chance to be reauthorized and available for the next five years. It's hard to imagine how folks struggling to make ends meet could survive a winter in Maine or a summer in Mississippi without Weatherization. Additionally, this bill modernizes the program so that it can make the most of 21st century equipment and information now available. The Community Action network is grateful for Senator Coons’ and Congressman Tonko’s efforts, and we look forward to working toward the bill's passage."

Jenae Bjelland, Executive Director of the National Association for State Community Services Programs, commented: “The WAP is a critical program that reduces the home energy costs of vulnerable families and makes their homes healthier and safer. This legislation will reauthorize WAP and allow the weatherization network to build upon its legacy of over 40 years of helping

low-income Americans. We applaud and appreciate the leadership of Senator Coons and Representative Tonko, who are tireless advocates for weatherization.”

David Terry, Executive Director of the National Association of State Energy Officials (NASEO), applauded the introduction of the weatherization reauthorization legislation and stated:

“Along with the reauthorization and modernization of the State Energy Program, this legislation is our highest priority for this Congress. We congratulate and thank Sen. Coons and Rep. Tonko for their long-time leadership on these issues. Americans will be significantly better off with the passage of the reauthorization legislation. Weatherization helps low-income Americans, veterans, disabled and the elderly stay in their homes by significantly reducing their energy bills. This is good public policy.”

Keith Aldridge, President and CEO of the Home Performance Coalition, added: “The U.S. Department of Energy’s Weatherization Assistance Program is vital to improving the housing and lives of low-income families across the country. Private contractors, and those who work for Weatherization Agencies, see first-hand the benefits to homeowners in both lower energy bills and a better quality of life. We applaud Senator Coons and Congressman Tonko for introducing the Weatherization and Enhancement and Local Energy Efficiency Investment and Accountability Act.”

A one-pager on the bill is available [here](#).

The bill text is available [here](#).

###