

BASIS STATEMENT: This replacement rule repeals and replaces in its entirety the current Home Energy Assistance Program Rule. The rule establishes standards for administering fuel assistance, emergency fuel assistance, weatherization, and heating system repair and replacement funds to income eligible households in the State of Maine. This replacement rule: updates the matrix used for determination of benefits, makes minor changes to clarify documentation requirements for citizenship, identity and social security number verification, increases the allowable time to reverse a denial for missing documentation for an application, updates income documentation and incorporates language to provide clarity and continuity between the rule and the State Plan, changes the threshold for the solicitation and use of price quotes for CHIP repairs, and adds a life-time maximum benefit per dwelling unit, and makes minor formatting and grammar edits.

PUBLIC COMMENT:

Process:

Summary of Comments and Responses to Comments:

Comment: Lynn Lugdon, Division Manager of Penquis, provided testimony at the public hearing. Lynn thanked Sarah Johson for all the time she put into getting the Rule and State Plan ready, including the benefit matrix, which Lynn indicated was a great change this year.

Response: MaineHousing appreciates the support.

Comment: Lynn Lugdon further commented that with the government shutdown last year and the increase in pricing for fuel, additional ECIP funding would likely be necessary as discretionary funding was low. Lynn commented that with the increased prices, including the large delivery fees Penquis saw last year, they would likely run out of ECIP funding quickly.

Response: MaineHousing appreciates this suggestion and will evaluate how to support the ECIP program for those households impacted by the high cost of deliverable fuels by making a change in the allocation to the ECIP program should this become necessary.

Comment: Lynn Lugdon recommended that MaineHousing consider changing ECIP from November 1st to April 30th to November 1st to March 31st. Lynn suggested this would help stretch the ECIP funding further.

Response: MaineHousing appreciates the suggestion, however, winter weather that creates large energy burdens for HEAP eligible households lasts longer than March 31st. The decision to continue the ECIP program through the end of April allows those households who may need an emergency delivery the availability to access funds for a longer period of time.