



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Brad Hoylman-Sigal

Senators Hoylman-Sigal & Krueger's Testimony on the New York State Plan for the 2023-2024 Home Energy Assistance Program (HEAP)

BRAD HOYLMAN-SIGAL April 14, 2023

Testimony of State Senator Brad Hoylman-Sigal and State Senator Liz Krueger to the New York State Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance Regarding the New York State Plan for the 2023-2024 Home Energy Assistance Program (HEAP)

Thank you for this opportunity to submit comments on the development of the 2023-2024 New York State Home Energy Assistance Program State Plan. We are submitting comments regarding an issue that has been brought to our attention by constituents in both the 47th and 28th Senate Districts.

Our offices have been contacted by multiple low-income tenants whose homes are heated via an unusual set-up - the landlord has made heat accessible to the apartments but the heat is not operational without the use of electric blowers. In order for the heating systems to run, these constituents must turn on the electric blowers, which consume substantial amounts of electricity and drive up electricity bills exponentially. Despite the tenants being liable for the cost to operate the heat, they are not eligible for the full HEAP benefit. There is nowhere on the HEAP application to specify this type of specific heating system. We urge OTDA to add a way to classify this heating system on the HEAP application and provide additional assistance to tenants so that they are able to acquire the appropriate benefit and

keep their heat running during the winter.

[*Family name removed*] live at [*address removed*] in a rent regulated apartment. Their heating system is called a Vertical Water Source Heat Pump, which requires electricity to operate. [*Names removed*] rental agreement states that the building has HVAC boosters and the tenant agrees to pay for the cost of electricity to run the fans. Therefore, they pay for their heat through their electricity bill, along with their other electric costs. Although their Con Ed bill increases due to the cost of running their heat each winter, they do not pay separately for heat and therefore have not been able to indicate their situation on a HEAP application. They have only been eligible to receive \$50 in HEAP benefits for the winter. They have found their electric bill increases by at least \$120 per month each winter, which they are unable to afford. Given that they need to use electricity to operate their heating system, they should be eligible for additional HEAP benefits so they can keep their apartment warm during the winter.

[*Name removed*] lives at [*address removed*] in a rent regulated unit under 421-a for the past 24 years. [*Name removed*] does not receive heat as an amenity included with rent. The heat is designed to turn on through the use of electric blowers known as Package Terminal Heat Pumps. The heat is only operational if the electric blowers are plugged in. [*Name removed*] pays for the heat through his electricity bill along with his other electric costs. His electric costs increase significantly when operating the heat pumps. Despite [*Name removed*] paying for heat, he has not qualified for the full HEAP benefit due to the design of the HEAP application. In both of these situations, the electric heat blowers are the primary heating source for these tenants.

Below please find our recommendations for changes to the HEAP application to include this specific type of electric heating:

1.

Section 3.1: Do you pay separately for heat? Yes - complete the information below

- a. My main source of heating is - Add option: Electric Heat Pump
- b. Is the heating bill in your name? yes/no
- c. Are you directly responsible to pay the bill? yes/no
- d. Your heating company's name is:
- e. Your heating company's address is:

2. Section 3.2: Do you pay a separate electric bill for utilities other than heat? Add option:
No - Complete the information below.

- a. Add option: Are your heating costs and utilities included in the same bill? Yes/no
- b. Add option: Can you operate the heat without using an electric heat pump? yes/no
- c. Add option: Are the electric heating pumps your primary heating source? yes/no
- d. Add option: Are you responsible for paying your electric bill? yes/no

We are advocating for these changes on the HEAP application because it is clear these tenants qualify based on the HEAP guidelines set by OTDA. We believe many tenants across New York are experiencing the same issue, and the number will inevitably increase as more and more buildings make the transition away from being heated with fossil fuels. The application should be designed to accurately describe this specific electric heating system so tenants across the state can receive the HEAP benefit they are eligible for. We thank you for considering our input on the Development of The New York State Plan for the 2023-2024 Home Energy Assistance Program.