

# **Illinois Approves Substantial Investments in Energy Efficiency & Energy Affordability**

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SPRINGFIELD - New four-year electricity and gas efficiency plans were recently approved by the Illinois Commerce Commission (ICC) that include significantly expanded investments in measures to reduce energy usage throughout the state to help residents and businesses improve the efficiency of their homes and buildings.

“These plans mark progress toward ensuring all Illinois residents can access a full range of energy efficiency benefits. From energy affordability to health and safety, workforce training to just hiring and contracting practices, the measures in this plan support stronger, healthier communities. We look forward to working to ensure that the implementation of these plans is done equitably, with a focus on frontline environmental justice and low-income communities who have for too long been left out of the clean energy economy,” said Cheryl Johnson, Executive Director, People for Community Recovery.

The plans that will lead to bill savings, comfort, health, safety, and climate benefits came after months of negotiations between consumer groups, environmental advocates, community organizations, city and state agencies, and utilities. The state climate package also includes additional efficiency expansions and would extend many of these critical benefits beyond the next four years.

"We at COFI are happy that the plans approved by the ICC will make energy more affordable for low-income folks across the state," says Donna Carpenter, a parent leader with COFI/POWER-PAC IL. "We're moving to have more clean energy in Illinois and these utility companies need to pitch in and do their part to invest the maximum amount of energy-efficiency funds to help low-income people who need it most."

The plans have a greater emphasis than previous iterations on equity, affordability, and programs serving under-resourced, low-income communities. Plans were approved this summer and will be implemented at the start of 2022.

“I am pleased we were able to secure a significant increase in funds each utility will dedicate to low-income residents,” Attorney General Kwame Raoul said. “As a result of this additional funding, savings and other benefits will be realized by residents in neighborhoods that have historically been overlooked by such efforts.”

### **Some key pieces of the newly approved Energy Efficiency Plans and Settlements include:**

? Significantly expanded low-income and low-income multifamily program budget and program design investments -about a \$50 million increase across all four utilities compared to their current plans

? More whole-building efficiency, such as air sealing, insulation, and expanding heat pump technology in low-income homes and buildings ? Health and safety dollars to help address other residential issues that potentially

prevent energy efficiency work from being completed

? Better coordination between energy efficiency, bill assistance, weatherization, and solar programs

? Increases in contracting and energy efficiency workforce opportunities for diverse businesses

? Improvements in reporting to better assess program performance

"Investing in energy efficiency means investing in consumer empowerment--programs coming out of these plans will help consumers take control of their energy costs," CUB Deputy Director Sarah Moskowitz said. "But efficiency doesn't just help one home or one building, it has a ripple effect, helping to improve reliability across the network, combat climate change, and lower costs for all energy customers. We're proud to be part of this effort among advocates."

Negotiations included participation from more local organizations working in lower-income communities and communities of color in Illinois than ever before. These groups pressed for a greater focus on equity and affordability in the plans.

"The newly approved plans represent a critical step forward for Illinois, with stronger connections between efficiency, health, and energy affordability. Having more voices involved in designing the programs was key to locking in deeper, more equitable investments in under-resourced communities and communities of color." said Laura Goldberg, Midwest Director of the Energy Efficiency for All Project at NRDC (Natural Resources Defense Council) "Reducing the household energy bill burden is essential for lower-income families. A seat at the table and sovereignty to inform what programs can produce the most benefit from energy efficiency programs are absolutely essential." said Naomi Davis, Green Power Alliance Founder & Lead Steward

*The following organizations worked to expand key parts of the new 2022-2025 Plans through negotiations with the utilities: ACES 4 Youth, Citizens Utility Board (CUB), City of Chicago, Community Organizing and Family Issues (COFI), by its attorney, National Consumer Law Center (NCLC), Environmental Law and Policy Center (ELPC), Green Power Alliance, NRDC (Natural Resources Defense Council), the People of the State of Illinois, by Illinois Attorney General Kwame Raoul, People for Community Recovery (PCR), and ICC Staff. The group included first-time negotiating organizations, ACES 4 Youth, COFI, Green Power Alliance, and PCR.*