



Helping People. Changing Lives.  
A Community Action Partnership

## **Testimony of Columbia Opportunities**

**Submitted to the New York State Joint Housing Budget Hearing**  
2/25/2026

Chair Krueger, Chair Pretlow, and Members of the Legislature:

My name is Shawn Jennings, and I am the program director of Columbia Opportunities, the Weatherization provider serving Columbia County NY. We appreciate the opportunity to submit testimony regarding the FY 2026 Housing Budget.

Columbia Opportunities strongly supports the joint testimony submitted by NYSWDA, the Association for Energy Affordability, and NYSCAA. We write to reinforce the urgent need to **restore and protect funding for the Weatherization Assistance Program (WAP) in the Fiscal Year 2027 Budget.**

### **About the Weatherization Assistance Program**

For decades, a majority of Weatherization in New York State has been funded through the consistent federal-state framework in which 10% of Home Energy Assistance Program (HEAP) funds are allocated to the Weatherization Assistance Program (WAP). This allocation is not discretionary; it is critical to the State's ability to deliver permanent, energy-related cost savings (and health & safety) measures to the homes of the local low-income families in our community. For our agency, the diversion of these funds represents a 60 percent reduction in available resources, fundamentally undermining our ability to sustain operations and deliver essential weatherization services.

### **What Weatherization Means in Our Community**

Weatherization is a federally authorized program that reduces energy costs for low-income households by improving home energy efficiency, ensuring safe heating systems, and addressing health and safety hazards.

---

Tina Sharpe, Executive Director  
540 Columbia Street, Hudson, NY 12534  
Phone: 518.828.4611 TDD Number 7-1-1 [www.columbiaopportunities.org](http://www.columbiaopportunities.org)   
Columbia Opportunities, Inc. is an Equal Opportunity Provider and Employer



Last year, our agency:

- Served 42 households
- Leveraged \$ 413,000. in federal and state funding
- Employed 6 staff and contractors
- Served residents in the districts of Columbia County NY

For many of the households we serve, energy costs consume a disproportionate share of income. Weatherization provides permanent bill reduction, improves housing quality, and stabilizes vulnerable families.

#### **The Impact of HEAP Funding Loss**

Without the HEAP Funding designated to WAP, our weatherization program will become unsustainable. It will force us to:

- Lay off our highly trained building science professionals
- Disrupt our contractor networks built over decades
- Increase energy burden for our low-income residents
- Greatly reduce the number of families we serve
- Consider ending the essential federally mandated Weatherization Assistance Program services we provide in our area.



**Columbia** *Inc.*  
**Opportunities**

Helping People. Changing Lives.  
A Community Action Partnership

This funding represents the majority of our annual operating capacity. Cuts would not be temporary — they would dismantle infrastructure that has taken decades for us to build.

We respectfully urge the Legislature to:

- **Restore and protect the 10 percent HEAP Weatherization Assistance Program (WAP) allocation through Social Services Law § 97(5) in the Fiscal Year 2027 Budget.**

Weatherization is one of the most cost-effective housing stabilization tools available. It permanently lowers utility costs, reduces arrears, prevents displacement, and strengthens communities across New York. For our organization, this translates into measurable, lasting affordability improvements for the households we serve—reducing crisis interventions and helping families, people with disabilities, and seniors remain safely in their homes.

We respectfully urge restoration of the 10 percent HEAP weatherization set-aside in the final FY 2026–27 State Budget. Thank you for your consideration and continued leadership on housing stability and affordability.

Respectfully submitted,

Shawn Jennings

Program Director Columbia Opportunities Weatherization  
2 Rock street Philmont, NY 12565  
518-672-7268  
sjennings@columbiaopportunities.org

---

Tina Sharpe, Executive Director  
540 Columbia Street, Hudson, NY 12534  
Phone: 518.828.4611 TDD Number 7-1-1 [www.columbiaopportunities.org](http://www.columbiaopportunities.org)   
Columbia Opportunities, Inc. is an Equal Opportunity Provider and Employer