



Economic Opportunity Program, Inc.

Strengthening the fabric of our community

Main Office:
650 Baldwin Street
Elmira, NY 14901
Phone (607) 734-6174
Fax (607) 733-8126

Schuyler County Office:
203 12th Street
Watkins Glen, NY 14891
Phone (607) 535-2468
Fax (607) 535-9859

www.cseop.org
www.facebook.com/EconomicOpportunityProgram

Testimony of Economic Opportunity Program, Inc of Chemung & Schuyler Counties

Submitted to the New York State Joint Housing Budget Hearing
February 25, 2026

Services

Birth to Five School
Readiness Program

Center of Excellence
(New Day Program)

Community Food for Jobs
Program & Bistro

Energy Services Bureau

Ernie Davis Community
Center

Family Support Services

Libertad-Elmira Veteran and
Family Program

Literacy Volunteers of
Chemung & Schuyler
Counties

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

My name is Andrea Ogunwumi, and I am the Chief Executive Officer of the Economic Opportunity Program, Inc of Chemung & Schuyler Counties, the Weatherization provider serving Chemung and Schuyler Counties in the Southern Tier Region. We appreciate the opportunity to submit testimony regarding the FY 2026-2027 Housing Budget.

The Economic Opportunity Program, Inc of Chemung & Schuyler Counties 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.



Our agency:

- Serves an average of 60-70 households a year; 65% are seniors, 75% with children under 17; and 20% are disabled. 82% of the households served are HEAP Recipients
- Service areas include designated economically disadvantaged zones as well as one of the poorest counties in New York State. The low-income households contain aging and deteriorating housing stock, including many that heat with high-cost fossil fuels.
- Employs 12 full time staff. Most of the staff have been serving our community in the WAP Program for several years.
- Serve residents in the districts of Assembly District 124; Assembly District 132; and NYS Senate District 58

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.

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.

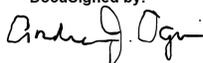
We respectfully urge the Legislature to:

- **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,

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Andrea Ogunwumi, Chief Executive Officer

Economic Opportunity Program, Inc of Chemung and Schuyler Counties

650 Baldwin Street

(607) 734-0795

aogunwumi@cseop.org