



For Immediate Release
October 17, 2017

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Weatherization benefits families, workers, communities

Because low-income households spend a greater portion of annual income on energy compared with average households, weatherization efforts can free up income for other essentials like food, medicine and education by making homes more energy efficient. During National Weatherization Month in October, Michigan Community Action (MCA) stresses the need for Weatherization Assistance Programs (WAP) to help struggling families.

“WAP provides energy savings to households that spend nearly 17 percent of their income on heating,” says **Kate White**, MCA executive director. “Because federal funding for low-income programs is uncertain, we as community advocates need to explain that programs like WAP make homes safer and healthier.”

By repairing windows and doors and installing insulation and weather stripping, homeowners and renters can reduce their energy usage by 15 to 20 percent, saving an average of \$250 to \$450 per year in heating, cooling and electrical costs.

WAP also helps reduce out-of-pocket medical costs. After weatherization, families' spending on medical care decreased by an average of \$514, according to a study by Oak Ridge National Laboratory sponsored by the U.S. Department of Energy. Residents of weatherized homes reported fewer asthma symptoms and hospitalizations after receiving services, and fewer missed days of work and school. In

addition to weatherization services, many agencies mitigate hazards by installing safety measures such as grab bars and ramps.

The program helps improve housing stock and neighborhood housing values while providing local contractors with work. Energy efficiency is the largest sector within the U.S. clean energy economy, accounting for 3 in 4 of its jobs and employing nearly 1.9 million people nationwide. WAP supports thousands of jobs that support communities.

Community Action Agencies administer the federal Weatherization Assistance Programs (WAP), creating job opportunities for local contractors and workers. WAP began in 1976 to help low-income American families save millions of dollars in heating and cooling costs and provide an economic boost in local communities. National Weatherization Day is Oct. 30.

Founded in 1975, MCA serves its 29 member agencies throughout Michigan to strengthen their capacity to alleviate the causes and circumstances of poverty.

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