

Energy Affordability and Accessibility Collaborative
September 15, 2021
Meeting Chat

EAAC Suggestion Box - <https://www.research.net/r/W682HZV>

Briana Parker - Taking a pause and asking who is not here and why, remembering the core goal

Anne Armstrong - The Commission staff is ready to collaborate with the Outreach and Education Committee on what a statewide outreach plan looks like.

Maria E Christian - Do we have a definition of "communities" and the inputs and outputs of those communities?

Amy Rittenhouse - [EAAC Guiding Values](#)

EAAC Guiding Values Team Running Notes

Our Guiding Principles/Values Volunteers (Two people to facilitate each guiding value)

BIO - Kelly Rose

Chief Housing Solutions Officer Chair, Michigan Interagency Council on Homelessness
Michigan State Housing Development Authority

Kelly A. Rose was appointed as the Chief Housing Solutions Officer for the Michigan State Housing Development Authority (MSHDA) in August 2016. She oversees Authority's efforts to assist the public in accessing quality, affordable housing through rental properties. Ms. Rose works collaboratively with communities and Authority partners to seek solutions to counteract housing insecurity, financial barriers, and homelessness.

Amy Rittenhouse – COVID Emergency Rental Assistance (CERA) - michigan.gov/cera

Anne Armstrong - Here is a link to the [CERA income limits for eligibility](#)

Alison Sutter – Yesterday, I gave our City of Grand Rapids Commission a briefing on why climate change is a crisis and a draft resolution declaring climate change is a crisis. Grand Rapids approaches resolutions very differently from other cities. We have only passed one resolution in the last 10-15 years. My colleague also presented a resolution declaring racism a public health crisis. Our resolutions will only include actions that can be taken by Commission (policy) versus operational actions (hiring staff; funding; declaring community-wide goals; etc.) that fall under the authority of our City Manager. Here are links to the presentation, video and a copy of the draft resolution.

Alison Sutter - <https://www.grandrapidsmi.gov/files/assets/public/meetings/city-commission/2021-09-14/2021-09-14-proposed-resolutions-climate-crisis-racism-as-public-health-crisis-support-for-entheogenic-decriminalization.pdf>

Alison Sutter - Video (go to the third hour):

https://www.facebook.com/CityofGrandRapids/videos/tuesday-morning-committee-meetings-september-14-2021/6349113098433966/?_so=_permalink&_rv=_related_videos

Amy Rittenhouse - www.michiganlegalhelp.org

Amy Rittenhouse - online application portal: [MSHDA - COVID Emergency Rental Assistance \(CERA\) \(michigan.gov\)](#)

Tammy Bair - BIO

Departmental Manager, Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS)

Tammy graduated from Michigan State University with a bachelor's degree in Social Relations from James Madison College. She has worked for the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS) for over twenty-one years. She spent the first ten years as a caseworker in Kent and Ionia counties before working in MDHHS' Central Office as the manager of the State Emergency Relief (SER) program, the Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) as well as the Michigan Energy Assistance Program (MEAP).

Anne Armstrong - Link to current FPL guidelines: <https://aspe.hhs.gov/topics/poverty-economic-mobility/poverty-guidelines>

U.S. Federal Poverty Guidelines Used to Determine Financial Eligibility for Certain Programs
HHS Poverty Guidelines for 2021

The 2021 poverty guidelines are in effect as of January 13, 2021

Anne Armstrong - A warrant is a 'check'.

Aimee Gendusa-English - Does MI ever pay vendors directly?

Antonette D. Noakes - For MDHHS: A number of links are being provided. Utilities may be able to include some of these in materials being sent to customers. Is there a desire for us to do so, or would there be any concerns?

Anne Armstrong - To receive State Emergency Relief (SER) a customer only has to have a past-due energy bill.

Amy Rittenhouse - State Emergency Relief Applications
Applicants can apply by completing one of the following:

- MDHHS-1171 (and MDHHS-1171-SER supplement)
- DHS 1514 or
- MDHHS online application found at [MI Bridges \(michigan.gov\)](http://MI Bridges (michigan.gov))

Anne Armstrong - All customers of participating utilities, including commercial and industrial customers, pay the funding factor which spreads the funding across more entities and not just households.

Luke Shaefer – BIO

Luke Shaefer is the Hermann and Amalie Kohn Professor of Social Justice and Social Policy and Associate Dean for Research and Policy Engagement at the Gerald R. Ford School of Public Policy at the University of Michigan. At U-M, he is also a professor of social work and the inaugural director of Poverty Solutions, an interdisciplinary, presidential initiative that partners with communities and policymakers to find new ways to prevent and alleviate poverty. Through his role at Poverty Solutions, Shaefer acts as a special counselor on anti-poverty policy to the director of the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services.

Shaefer's research on poverty and social welfare policy in the United States has been published in top peer-reviewed academic journals in the fields of public policy, social work, public health, health services research, and history, and his work has been supported by the National Science Foundation, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, and U.S. Census Bureau among other sources. He has presented his research at the White House and before numerous federal agencies, has testified before the U.S. Senate Finance Committee, and has advised a number of the nation's largest human service providers.

His work has been cited in media outlets such as the *New York Times*, *Washington Post*, *The Economist*, *The Atlantic*, and *Los Angeles Times*, and he has been featured on such programs as *Marketplace* and CNBC's *Nightly Business Report*. His book with Kathryn Edin, *\$2.00 a Day: Living on Almost Nothing in America*, was named one of the 100 Notable Books of 2015 by the *New York Times Book Review* and won the Hillman Prize for Book Journalism among other awards. He was recently named to an Andrew Carnegie Fellowship

Anne Armstrong - ARPA = American Rescue Plan Act passed in March by Congress. The State legislature needs to appropriate the funds before they can be distributed to customers in need.

Martin Kushler - Please let us know whatever we could do to increase the ARP LIHEAP allocation to weatherization. This will not only help families to have affordable energy bills over time, it will be critically important to helping to achieve the Governor's climate goals. Thanks.

Annika Brindel - Could you please put the specific question in the chat?

Jill Steiner - Who will deliver the increased weatherization? Is there capacity building happening now?

Luke Shaefer - What more can we do to improve preventive energy assistance programs and services in Michigan?

Tammy Bair - I was also going to state that the LIHEAP office works very closely with BCAEO, who oversees the CAAs and delivery of Weatherization.

Matt Bandyk - What can be done to simplify the application process to energy assistance programs?

Annika Brindel - Remove the burden of seeking assistance from the household that is struggling with their bills. Have assistance (or better yet affordable bills) be automatic. If the utilities had just a little more data about their customers, we would be able to easily identify income-eligible households who are struggling to pay their bills and they could be proactively enrolled in all relevant programs.

Susan Lindson - One of the main blocks to increasing weatherization services is the lack of certified Energy Auditors and QCIs. There is a large shortage of those qualified individuals.

Maria E Christian - What can be done to incentivize and hold accountable the low-income housing community around weatherization and energy reduction.

Susan Lindson - Long-term we are building the pipelines (more Energy Auditors), but short term that is what is stopping us from doing more.

Jill Steiner - Maybe directing some weatherization funding to housing rehabilitation agencies so they can add efficiency when they are making repairs.

Susan Lindson - Well said, Matt. time and effort have a cost.

Benjamin Gulker - As a staff member at BCAEO, I can add that there are significant capacity building efforts underway in Weatherization. Maddy Kamalay is the Specialist on our team and would be happy to discuss those efforts.

Martin Kushler - Yes, the magnitude of the challenge we face to weatherize all eligible homes will require some flexibility and creative solutions. All hands-on deck.

Bethany Stutzman - Per Matt's point, we have had clients who were so overwhelmed by the process (even with their utilities being shut off) that they just weren't providing the required documentation. Our staff have been able to provide more intense support, but the documentation, etc. is just overwhelming especially for people who are already stressed to the max and overwhelmed.

Maria E Christian - @Gulker,Benjamin, I would be interested in those efforts.

Maddy Kamalay - I was just able to join the call if there are specific Weatherization questions for the state.

Anne Armstrong - Ben, in conjunction with the LI-EWR workgroup, we can organize a session on that and coordination with energy assistance early next year.

Martin Kushler - Yes, good to bring in LI-EWR. Will be important to coordinate utility efforts with WAP efforts.

Susan Lindson - It seems timely to address landlords, especially now that there are so many companies buying homes for cash to rent them out.

Roberta Marks - In addition to Landlords, it is my hope that the Builders can join the discussion on energy waste reduction because my Condo structure does not allow an energy efficiency furnace.

Anne Armstrong - Maddie can you provide a link to SB647?

Anne Armstrong - Because of this robust discussion, we will be deferring an update from the Definitions Subcommittee, however there is a great update in the slide deck which will be available on the website sometime this week.

Maddy Kamalay - My email address is kamalaym@michigan.gov

Anne Armstrong - Thanks for being available, Maddy.

Martin Kushler - If the state, and the nation, are serious about climate goals, there will need to be a major and sustained ramp-up in weatherization. Hopefully folks will make that a priority. Avoid the 'boom and bust' scenario that we had with ARRA.

Bethany Stutzman - An obstacle for our clients in how the HHC is administered - the utilities apply the HHC to the oldest amount due. So, when clients are on an Affordable Payment Plan (where their past due balance will be forgiven if they successfully complete), there is not an incentive for our clients to apply.

Anne Armstrong - Bethany is with United Way Jackson County and serves households with many types of energy assistance among other services.

Susan Lindson - higher eligibility

Martin Kushler - Yes, more money for Weatherization. Michigan has tended to lag nearby states in the % of LIHEAP allocated to weatherization.

Mary A Wilkins - The benefit amount of HHC is very low. Allocating more resources to heating rather than crisis has the potential to reduce crises.

Susan Lindson - The usage idea would be great if they live in a home that is energy efficient. it won't work for everyone.

Julie Cassidy - I don't think we should be policing people's energy use like that.

Susan Lindson – Also, not everyone has Wi-Fi to have smart thermostats

Brittany Turner - I agree, I don't think we should be policing people's energy use either.

Amy Rittenhouse - Read more about Luke Shaefer's research and cited works: » [H. Luke Shaefer \(umich.edu\)](https://www.umich.edu)

EAAC Suggestion Box link: <https://www.research.net/r/W682HZV>

EAAC Documents and Resources page: [MPSC - ENERGY AFFORDABILITY AND ACCESSIBILITY COLLABORATIVE DOCUMENTS AND RESOURCES \(michigan.gov\)](https://www.michigan.gov/eaac)

EAAC Webpage: [MPSC - Energy Affordability and Accessibility Collaborative \(michigan.gov\)](https://www.michigan.gov/eaac)

EAAC Subcommittee sign up: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/VX7758X>

[EAAC Guiding Values](#)