

EWB Low Income Workgroup

May 5, 2022



Agenda

Welcome and Introductions

Brad Banks, MPSC

Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

Shatina Jones

DEI Officer

Michigan Public Service Commission

LiHEAP Direct Support

Andrew McNeally

Upper Penninsula Power Company

Energy Affordability and Accessibility Collaborative Reports:

EAAC Outreach and Education

Reka Holley-Voelker

Communications Section Manager

Michigan Public Service Commission

EAAC Data Analysis and Regulatory Review

Jake Thelen

Customer Assistance Division

Michigan Public Service Commission

EAAC Affordability, Alignment, and Assistance

AAA + EWR workgroup

Elaina Braunschweig

Regulated Energy Division

Michigan Public Service Commission

EAAC Definitions

Mary Wilkins

Customer Assistance Division

Michigan Public Service Commission

Introduction to the Low Income Energy Policy Board

Mary Wilkins

Customer Assistance Division

Michigan Public Service Commission

Q & A

Wrap Up and Adjourn

Michigan Public Service Commission's Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion (DEI) Overview

Presented by Shatina Jones



DEI Mission Statement

We are committed to developing action-oriented strategies that reinforce the Michigan Public Service Commission as a safe, welcoming work environment and an organization that serves all Michiganders equitably as we fulfill our mission as utility regulators. We are vowing to change how we approach our work, to help end systemic and overt racism, both internally and externally, stop discrimination, and adjust how we interact with one another as well our community. We are dedicated to providing the resources to support the development and implementation of this effort, and to address institutional or cultural barriers that historically have inhibited or may inhibit progress toward these goals.

Internal Committees

Communications
/Planning

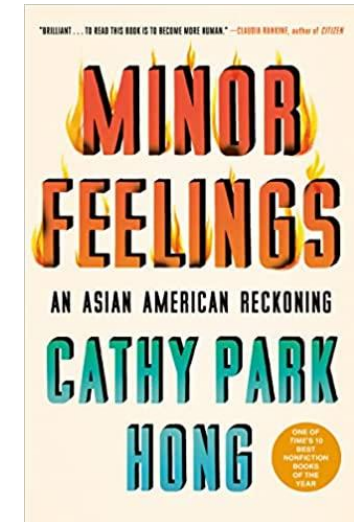
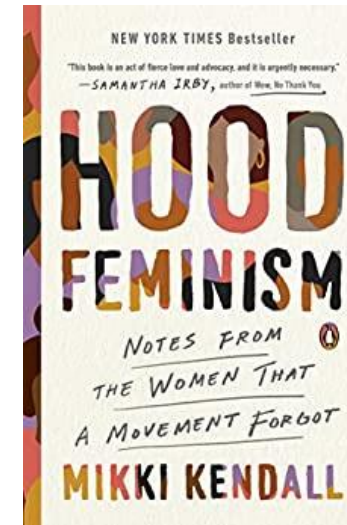
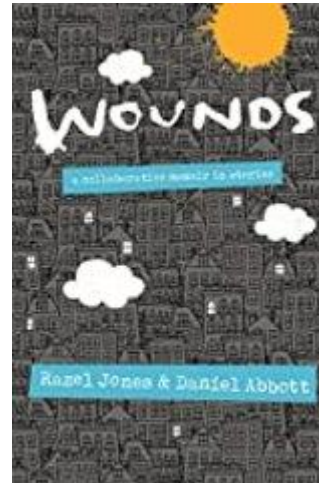
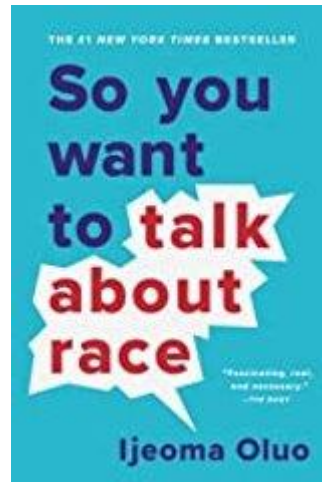
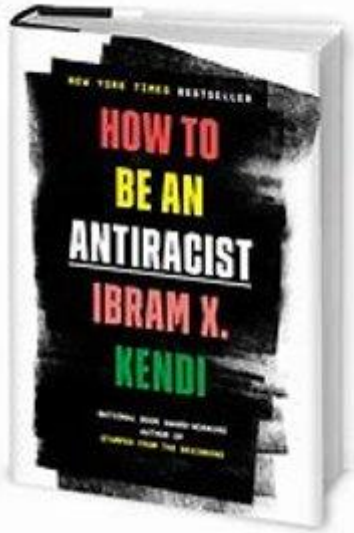
Employee
Resource Group

Hiring,
Retention, &
Recruitment

Management &
Staff Training

Policy &
Regulatory

Research & Methodologies Group



Highlights

- 100% participation in SOM Bias Training
- Vaccine Hesitancy Roundtable
- MPSC DEI Staff Survey
- Human Resource Non-Bias Pilot Program Participant
- Listening Sessions
- Inclusion Calendar Events
- Reestablish ERG groups internally and collaborated with LARA's ERG groups
- Staff on the Low-Income Policy Board
- Staff participation in the EAAC & Low-Income workgroups
- Staff participation in DEI focused workgroups and committees throughout LARA & EOG

Highlights (Cont'd)

- DEI section in Staff newsletter and Staff bulletin
- DEI Mission Statement
- 2022 DEI budget
- DEI Training
- Docket U-18238
- External DEI Groups
- Energy Round Table Discussion-Washington D.C.
- NUDC Conference-Chicago, IL
- MARC 2022-Chicago, IL

Future Goals

- Expand learning opportunities & recommendations to all Staff through activities and available training
- Increase Staff participation
- Get into the community
- Continue to evaluate policies for equity and inclusiveness internally and externally
- Future stakeholder listening sessions

Questions?

- Shatina Jones Joness59@michigan.gov 517-420-7405

LiHEAP Direct Support

Andrew McNeally
UPPCo



EAAC Subcommittee Update

Outreach and Education

Reka Holley Voelker, MPSC

Subcommittee Co-lead



Michigan Public Service Commission

Commission Charge

Feb. 10, 2022, [order](#) in [U-20757](#)

- Establish regular mechanism for stakeholders to provide input on improving communications and materials
- Broaden outreach to groups traditionally not a part of utility communications
- Improve the dissemination of energy assistance information to difficult to reach customers

Proposed 2022 Committee Goals

Commission Charge

1. Establish regular mechanism for stakeholders to provide input on improving communications and materials
2. Broaden outreach groups traditionally not a part of utility communications
3. Improve the dissemination of energy assistance information to difficult to reach customers

Proposed 2022 Goals

1. Establish a process for stakeholder and community-based input re: materials and communications channels
2. Review and provide input for improving the Commission's Energy Assistance Toolkit which will be updated and reissued Oct. 1, 2022, for the 2022/2023 heating season
3. Identify community-based groups, not already a part of the Commission's outreach, that will partner with the Commission to disseminate assistance information for the 2022/2023 heating season

Progress to date

- Identified and reinforced guiding values
- Discussions regarding outreach and education challenges and opportunities
- Developed proposed goals and draft 2022 workplan

Next Steps

- Finalize goals and Subcommittee workplan
- Begin work on the Commission's charge to establish a regular mechanism for stakeholders to provide input on improving communications and materials:
 - Identifying materials to which the charge applies
 - Identifying gaps in currently available Commission materials related to energy accessibility, affordability, and assistance
- Define the role of stakeholders in materials development

EAAC Data Analysis and Regulatory Review

Jake Thelen, MPSC



Data Analysis and Regulatory Review Subcommittee Report

Jake Thelen, Workgroup Lead

Charge and Goals

Commission Charge

- Develop a long-term data collection strategy and review existing customer protections. The focus is separated into two parts
 - Data analysis
 - Regulatory review of the Consumer Standards and Billing Practices for Electric and Natural Gas Service (Billing Rules)

Committee Goals

- Engage in discussions that will assist MPSC Staff in preparing a report providing recommendations to be filed in December 2022, under Case No. U-20757.
- Continue to focus on the data needs and rule based-protections for: purpose of identifying and addressing customer protection and affordability moving forward

Stakeholder Involvement

Who is the subcommittee comprised of?

- MPSC Staff, utilities, advocates, action agencies, & other state departments

Methods used for gaining stakeholder input

- Participants can share ideas, opinions, concerns, etc. during the open session via voice or chat, stakeholder leads contacts, suggestion box, and a future survey.



Data Analysis and Regulatory Review Progress and Next Steps

Progress to date

Launched on March 15, 2022, the subcommittee is setting foundational education on what type of data the Commission currently collects and a clear understanding of each point.



Next steps

Future meetings will consist of open dialogue addressing the need for additional data to understand affordability trends and for additional protections or services.



Opportunities for Collaboration with other committees or groups

Anyone can join the subcommittee at any time.
Meetings are conducted the third Thursday of the
month from 10:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.



Questions and/or Suggestions for the Board

None at this time

Data Analysis and Regulatory Review Subcommittee Discussion Items

EAAC Affordability, Alignment and Assistance Subcommittee

Elaina Braunschweig (MPSC—Rates and Tariff) Braunschweig@michigan.gov



Subcommittee Charge and Guiding Statement

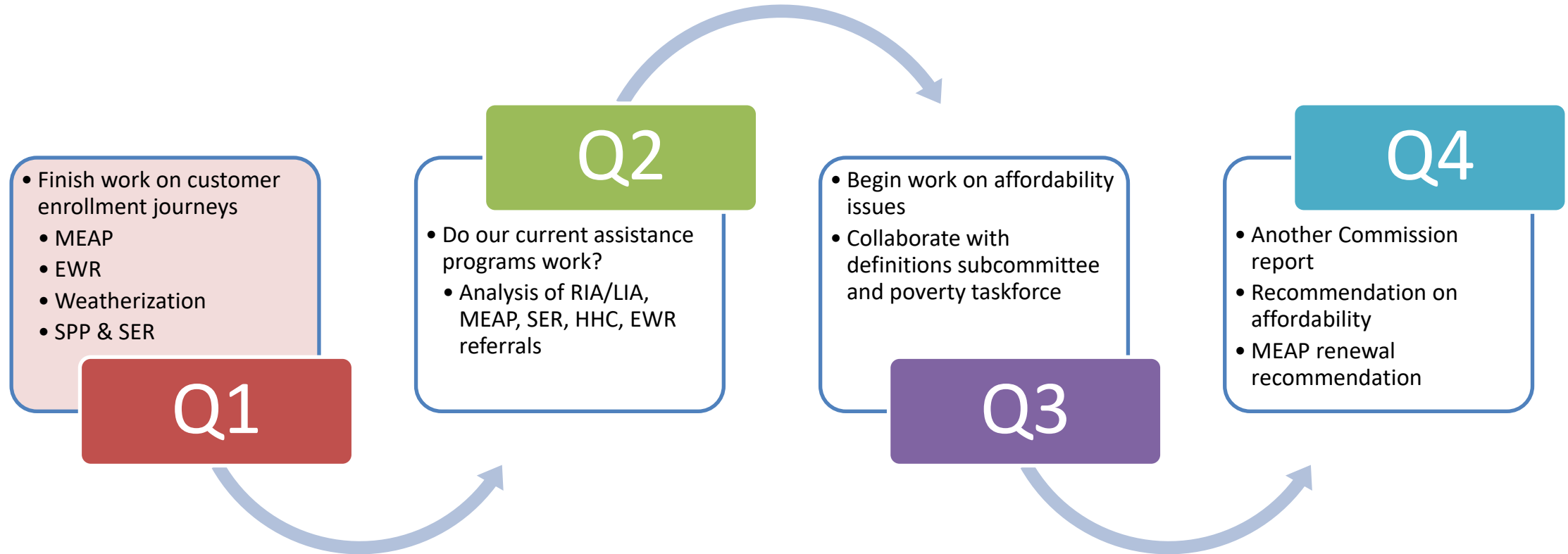
- Subcommittee Charge:
 - *Streamlining and making more accessible* existing energy assistance programs
 - *Researching* next generation affordable payment plans
 - *Analyzing* collections processes and disconnections
 - *Integrating* with EWR, weatherization, and rate design
- Guiding Statement:
 - End the crisis-assistance-crisis cycle by centering energy affordability and facilitating customers sustainably affording their energy bills by providing all households with uninterrupted access to affordable, sufficient energy in an efficient, healthy, and sustainable manner.
 - This ideal system/program design should achieve this while also:
 - **Ensuring equitable distribution** in the access to, use of, and outcomes from energy affordability and assistance policies/programs
 - **Centering impacted community priorities** and participation in policy/program development, accountability, and assessment
 - **Treating customers with dignity**, enabling them to live comfortably, and not penalizing customers for an inability to pay their bills
 - **Coordinating and communicating clearly** with relevant state agencies to integrate state policy goals, including those related to healthy homes and climate change



Stakeholder Involvement

- The subcommittee is comprised of representatives from various community organizations, utilities, regulators, policy-makers, energy contractors, state and local government employees, researchers/evaluators, as well as impacted/interested community members.
- We also have an ad-hoc EWR group, whose goal is to improve the EWR referral process for assistance recipients.
- Methods to gain input include anonymous surveys, open dialogue, previously a Google Doc, emails, and we continue to explore other virtual collaboration tools

Progress & Next Steps (2022)



Goals

Eligibility	Accessibility	Process	Alignment
Expanding what defines low-income; opportunity for going further	Utilities should advertise the low-income credits and PIPP programs on their websites	Proactive outreach to past recipients by MEAP grantees	Align the income eligibility for the different programs
Eligibility lookback periods (90 days, 30 days, others 3 months)	Utilities handle virtual assessments for EWR since some people are not comfortable with others in their home	MEAP & Utilities--capture those not in crisis to enroll in PIPP, RIA. Don't just refer customers who make contact to SER. Enroll in RIA.	FPL/AMI/ALICE – aligning criteria
Eligibility prior to crisis—how can we perform outreach without intruding on data privacy?	Changing the term “home energy assessment” to “energy insight report” can increase uptake—less intimidating	Need to reach out to customers who self-attest to RIA/LIA and offer EWR and other services	Asset limits for SER but not others—need to capture those denied SER and give them other assistance
	Standard application for assistance	Need central platform between MEAP and utilities to see services performed/assistance offered to a customer	
		Train caseworkers/staff to believe in EWR—can increase quality of referrals. Have them do an energy assessment on their home or see one happen	
		Schedule customers in crisis for EWR right on the phone—increase uptake	

Opportunities for Collaboration

- Collaboration Opportunities
 - LIEWR: working with Brad Banks, utilities, and stakeholders on optimizing EWR referrals for assistance recipients
 - DARR: looking into data required to determine program effectiveness
 - Outreach Subcommittee: recommendations on customer outreach
 - Ad-hoc Definitions Subcommittee: some affordability work

EAAC Definitions Subcommittee

Mary Wilkins, MPSC Staff Co-chair



EAAC Definitions Subcommittee

Mary Wilkins, MPSC Subcommittee Co-chair

Who leads the committee

- Original co-chairs: Anne Armstrong (MPSC) and Mary Wilkins (The Salvation Army)
- Current co-chairs: Mary Wilkins (MPSC) and Wende Randall (Kent Co. Essential Needs Task Force)

Who is the subcommittee comprised of?

- There are 21 individuals signed up for the subcommittee with 12 to 15 in attendance at any given meeting.
 - A third of participants represent utilities
 - A quarter represent advocacy groups
 - Another quarter are SOM employees
 - The balance are service agencies

EAAC Definitions Subcommittee

Commission Charge

- Establish common definition of energy security/self-sufficiency – begin with proposed definition by MEAP Workgroup Subcommittee.
- Develop proposal for an energy affordability standard and how the standard can be integrated into the regulatory environment.
- Draft suggested requirements for consistent energy affordability-related information for utilities to submit to appropriate dockets: rate cases, IRPs, EWR cases.

Definitions Subcommittee Progress To Date

01

Began work in August 2021, meeting bi-weekly

02

Reviewed concepts related to self-sufficiency and energy security

03

Surveyed committee members at key points, three definitions

04

Surveyed stakeholders:
Agencies
Advocates
Utilities

05

Applied survey results to draft definitions
Identified a proposed definition.


Proposed Definition of Energy Affordability

“A household has the resources to meet their home energy needs for heating, cooling and other uses in a healthy, sustainable and energy efficient manner without compromising a household’s ability to meet other basic needs.”

Wednesday, April 20, 2022

Definitions Subcommittee Next Steps

Develop a companion document and recommend a definition of Energy Affordability to the Low-Income Energy Policy Board - July 2022



Develop a proposal for an energy affordability standard - November 2022



Determine how the standard can be integrated into the regulatory environment

Definitions Subcommittee

Opportunities for Collaboration with other committees or groups

- Once the work on the definition's companion document is completed, in considering a standard, there may be cross-over with AAA and DARR.

Considerations

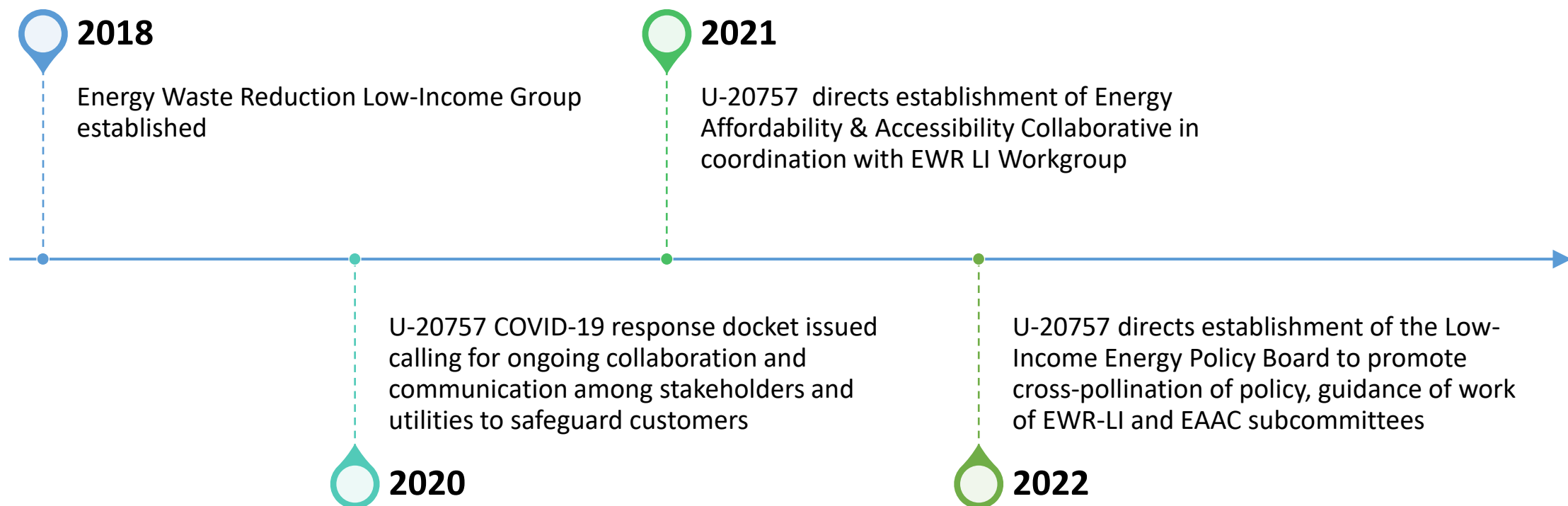
- Energy affordability is most commonly calculated by dividing annual energy costs by annual income:
Energy Burden
- Through committee discussions and constituent surveys, it became apparent that affordability is more complex than this simple calculation.
- Customers want us to know that health and wellness, safety, efficiency, and sustainability are important considerations in assessing the affordability of energy.

Low-Income Energy Policy Board

Kicked-off on Friday,
April 29, 2022



Low-Income Energy Policy Board Origins



February 2021: Energy Affordability & Accessibility Collaborative

Created in U-20757

- Recommend approaches for simplifying the energy assistance and customer protection systems, working with the EWR Low-Income workgroup
 - Simplify the energy assistance/EWR application & eligibility process
 - Next generation Affordable Payment Plans (APPs)
 - Structures for EWR and energy assistance linkages
- Explore a common definition of energy affordability and energy security with the goal of reducing the number of households in Michigan with unsustainable energy burdens
- Develop and recommend a long-term data collection strategy to inform program design and policy change
- Review rule-based protections
- Communication and engagement

February 10, 2022: Advisory Committee (LIEP Board)

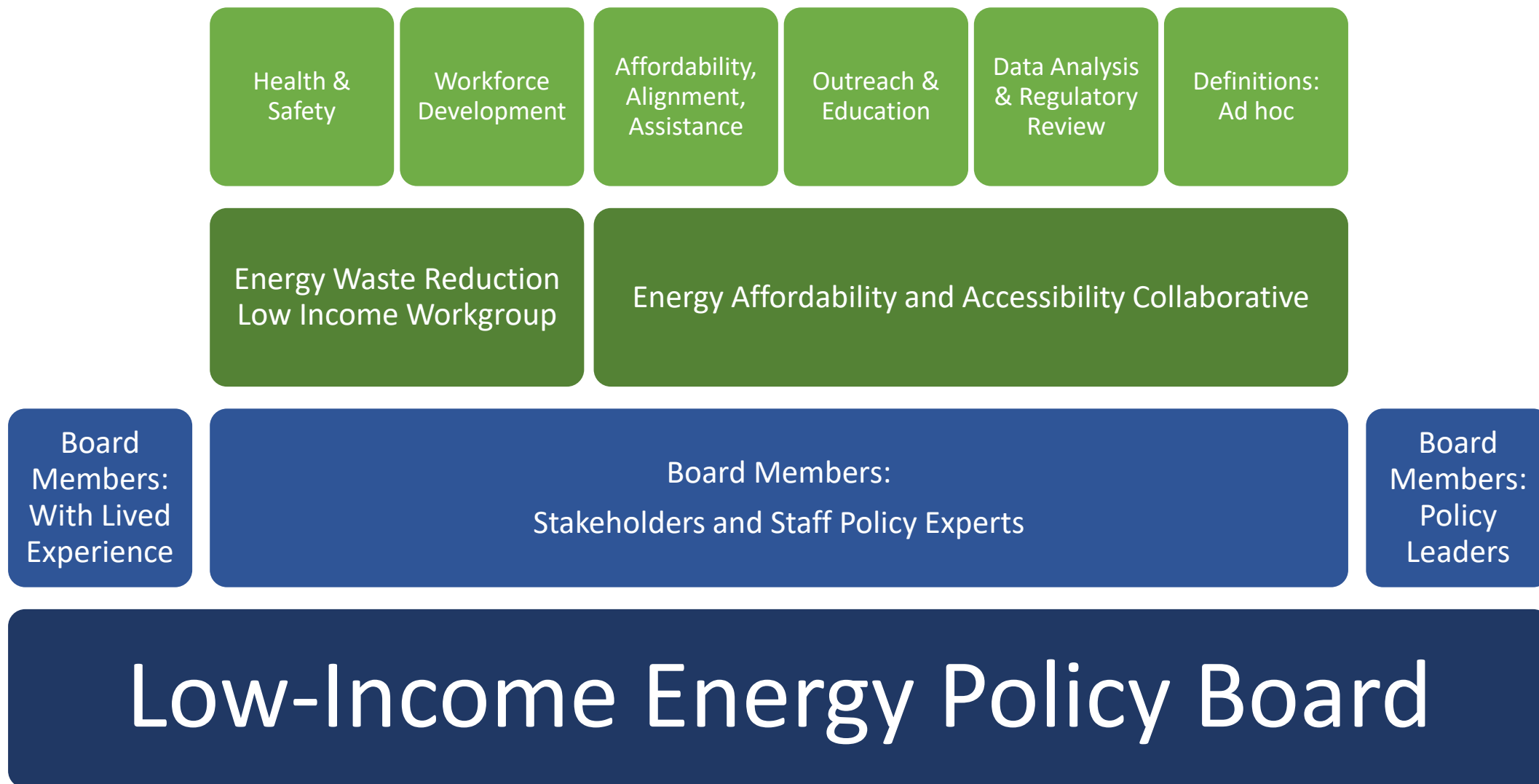
Created in U-20757

General Direction

- Continue the Collaborative for at least two additional years with assessment in the future as to the Collaborative's lifespan.
- Direct investor-owned utilities to continue to file monthly reports in this docket detailing the data on shutoffs and arrearages.
- File a progress report to be filed no later than December 16, 2022.

Directives This Board Addresses

- Adopt the proposed structure of the Collaborative, including an Advisory Committee comprised of EAAC and EWR – LI leadership.
- Increase participation of historically marginalized communities in policy development and leadership, working with MPSC DEI Committee.
- Collaborate with the Governor's Poverty Task Force, the Governor's Council on Climate Solutions, and the Council on Future Mobility and Electrification to contribute to cohesive policy across state agencies.



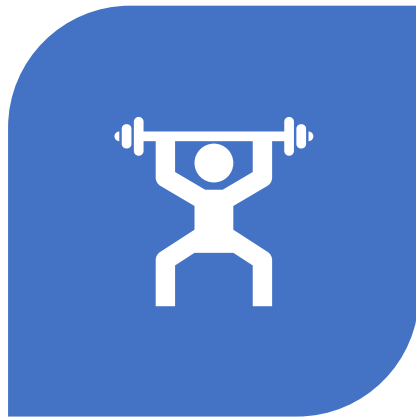
Nature of the Low-Income Energy Policy Board

Advisory in
nature

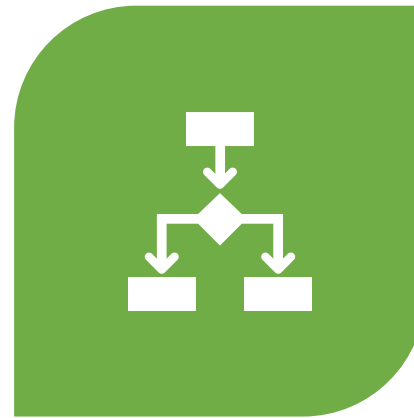
Comprised of
stakeholders

This board
may evolve
over time

Responsibilities of the Low-Income Energy Policy Board



CROSS-POLLINATION AND
SYSTEM COORDINATION



DECISION-MAKING



PLANNING

More Information on the Low-Income Energy Policy Board

[Low-Income Energy Policy Board \(michigan.gov\)](http://michigan.gov)



Low-Income Energy Policy Board Leaders

Anne Armstrong, MPSC EAAC Leader
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Brad Banks, MPSC EWR-Low Income
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Q & A



Close & Adjourn

Thank You!



Michigan Public Service Commission