BUILDING COALITIONS TO SUSTAIN THE SAFETY NET:

The Coalition to Keep Michigan Warm

NEUAC Conference, San Diego
June 10, 2013
The Coalition to Keep Michigan Warm is a committed, collaborative of organizations including energy service providers, State government, non-profit energy assistance providers and concerned individual supporters. We work to increase the financial and human resources available to address the energy needs of Michigan’s low-income households through information gathering, policy analysis and advocacy.
PARTICIPATING ORGANIZATIONS

To name just a few...

Consumers Energy
United Way
DTE Energy
The Salvation Army
SEMCO ENERGY
MECA
The Heat and Warmth Fund
Michigan Electric and Gas Association
Michigan Community Action
Michigan Energy Options
LARA Licensing and Regulatory Affairs
GOALS & OBJECTIVES

- **Inform policymakers** about problems of energy insecurity faced by low-income households.*

- **Increase awareness and build support for sustained funding** to federal programs like LIHEAP and federal weatherization programs, as well as supplemental state LIEAF funding.

- **Collaborate with state officials and among provider members** to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of energy assistance delivery.*

- **Help low-income individuals understand and utilize** their energy assistance & weatherization options to the greatest sustainable benefit.

- **Build loyalty** with CTKMW members, supporters, decision makers, and the media to activate responsiveness at critical junctures.
Over the past 10 years...

- Michigan has experienced the **largest drop in median income in the nation**.
- **Poverty in Michigan** has grown by 66%, the **fastest growth in the nation**:
  - Over 1.5 million Michigan residents (15.7% population per ACS/census) lived in poverty in 2011. One in every four were children.
  - 18% Michigan population currently receive food assistance, including more than 735,000 children.

More than **400,000 people are still unemployed**.

*Sources: ACS/Census, December 2012 Poverty Report and Kids Count, Michigan League for Public Policy*
ENERGY INSECURITY:
KEY INDICATORS: INCREASING REQUESTS & LIMITED FUNDING

- “Housing & Utilities” is the highest call volume category among emergency calls to United Way’s 2-1-1 (150,000/yr. and growing):
  - More than 600,000 Michigan households annually receive energy assistance from federal LIHEAP-funded programs (only 50% of eligible).
  - Since 2002, $570 M in supplemental state-funded grants have enabled a network of non-profit agencies to address energy crisis for avg. 100,000 households per year (more than 1 million in total).

- Traditional utility responses (budget/protection programs) aren’t effectively improving payment patterns.
  - On average, 30,000 income-qualified budget plan defaults per month.
  - More than 400,000 disconnect orders for non-pay issued each month.

- Shut-off protection is not universal.

- Other human impacts:
  - “Heat or Eat” scenarios compromise health & safety, esp. seniors & homebound.
  - Disconnection is a common precursor to family separation &/or homelessness.

*Sources: United Way 2-1-1 annual reporting, MPSC Quarterly Reporting (all companies aggregated), Feeding America’s Hunger in America 2010
PAYMENT PROGRAMS AND SUPPORT

- State Emergency Relief (DHS)
- Home Heating Credits (Treasury)
- State-funded LIEAF Grants to Agency Agencies
- Utility programs:
  - Senior and Low Income credits
  - Shut-Off Protection/Winter Protection Plans
  - Utility-specific customer programs, pilots, and agency partnerships

Assistance dollars and shut off protection plans are bandages.
- Weatherization Assistance Program offered through Community Action Agencies install refrigerators, CFLs, insulation, furnaces, etc.

- Energy Optimization Programs funded by utility customers provide rebates and installations of energy saving measures.

- Energy Education classes & materials offered by non-profit agencies and utilities that provide tips on reducing energy usage.

Affordability + Energy Education & Energy Efficiency = long-term solutions.
PATH TO SELF SUFFICIENCY

- Improve the connectivity to resources (2-1-1)
- Shrink the time between use and pay (Utilities):
  - Customizable billing options / e.g., pre-pay
  - Tools/technology to better manage consumption / Smart meters
- Deliver healthy interventions that prevent repeat occurrences (Agencies – bill assistance & weatherization):
  - Energy Case Management – habits/goal-setting, better budgeting + Weatherization, energy education, & DIY to lower usage.
  - Community & Peer Support Networks
  - Tracking Outcomes – to define success metrics
- Develop strategic operational partnerships with State of Michigan’s social service agencies to maximize solutions:
  - DHS – Emergency services, MSHDA - Housing, OSA - Seniors, DMVA - Veterans, CMH – Mental Health, others
Be Collaborative & Strategic –

1. Reach those in need
2. Heighten public awareness
3. Raise dollars to fill critical gaps

- **Customer Assistance events** – Utility CADs, DHS resource fairs, *Project Connect* events, County Fairs
- **Senior & Veterans specific initiatives** – Gatekeeper (OSA), Older Michiganders Day, *Joining Forces Michigan* with 2-1-1
- **Legislator-initiated** public forums, CtKMW coauthored op-eds/TV
- **Statewide Walks for Warmth** (Community Action Agencies)
- **The Heat & Warmth Fund (THAW)** – Week of Warmth, Radiothon
- **PeopleCare** (Salvation Army | Consumers Energy) – 30 yrs. strong
- **Coalition to Keep MI Warm coordinated events** – e.g. Traverse City Chamber of Commerce Sleep Out, Legislative Action Week
**Regulatory Landscape**
- Protection of vulnerable customers (low-income & seniors)
- Reduction of bad debt expense

**Governor’s Energy Assistance Focus**
- Energy Message November 28, 2012: Emphasis on affordability and passage of low income energy assistance reform and funding legislation
- Proclamation naming February *Keep Michigan Warm month*
- 2014 Budget Recommendation (2/7/13) for $60 M from utility surcharge

**Michigan Legislature**
- Senator Bruce Caswell workgroup/enactment of SB 1135 (PA 615 of 2012)
  - Requires DHS to establish and administer energy assistance programs that lead low income customers to become **self-sufficient**
  - Crisis is redefined to include past due notice
- Stable state funding source is a focus for 2013

**U.S. Congress**
- LIHEAP funding unpredictable/sequester
A MICHIGAN SOLUTION: Coalition’s 2013 platform

Operational Focus

Public Policy Changes

Strategic Partnerships

Innovative Solutions to enable
ENERGY SELF-SUFFICIENCY

3 Key Considerations | Michigan’s next energy policy:
• Affordability & policy impacts (disproportionate) to low-income
• Need for stable funding streams to help those at highest risk
• Opportunity to try new pathways to self sufficiency
CTKMW ADVOCACY HIGHLIGHTS

Key Activities

- Launched a redesigned website and a new online communications platform
- Re-mobilized the coalition members with a high level of engagement
- Led company outreach initiatives to enroll new coalition supporters
- Organized focused “calls to action” e-mail and letter campaign to legislators
- Engaged in media outreach and communication

2011 Highlights

- 19 press releases issued.
- 126 individuals sent 419 e-mails to 17 elected officials
- 32 individuals sent 66 “Thank you” e-mails to Senators Stabenow and Levin
- 87 individuals sent 176 emails to 86 MI legislators on LIEEF.
- 10 grassroots e-mails sent since LIHEAP Action Day.
- 899 Facebook likes (room for improvement).
- 69 Followers on Twitter (room for improvement).

2012 Advocacy Impact

- Launched coalition blog and calendar on the website.
- Launched newsletter.
- Participated in LIHEAP Action Day.
- Teamed up with Chamber of Commerce for Traverse City Sleep Out.
- Passage of Energy Assistance legislation
Activities:
• Coldest Day Campaign (Jan-Feb)
• Lansing Legislative Action week (Feb. 11-15)
• February 2013, Governor’s appointed Keep Michigan Warm month
• Walks for Warmth promotion (January – April)
• NFFN’s LIHEAP Action Day delegation (April 10)
• Coalition coordinator hire to elevate presence, among strategic goals (June)

Impact:
• Grew to over 7,000 supporters
• 1,246 Facebook likes a 39% increase in the past year
• 235 followers on Twitter, a 241% increase in the past year
• 114 letters sent to Congress
• Created an audio news release to raise LIHEAP support awareness that was carried by 40 stations around the state
Whitney Skeans
Coalition to Keep Michigan Warm, Co-Chair
Customer Assistance Coordinator, Regulatory Affairs
Consumers Energy
1048 Pierpont | P.O. Box 27307
Lansing, MI 48909
517-740-6574 | Fx: 517-393-1741
weskeans@cmsenergy.com

Visit the Coalition & join as a supporter at:
www.coalitiontokeepmichiganwarm.com
Appendix | How to *Build* a Successful State Coalition

- Elements of a Successful Coalition
- A Coalition Model to Yield Success
- Impact of Advocacy in the Current Political Environment
- How to Have the Most Impact
Elements of a Successful Coalition

• Provide your coalition with a **Digital Hub** that is the public face of the coalition.

• Enhance the **branding** by promoting the coalition in local communities, media opportunities and online.

• **Recruit and sustain** coalition supporters that provide the mass of the coalition—keep them engaged, updated and provide opportunities for them to advocate alongside the coalition.

• **Empower** the core membership of the coalition to participate in advocacy activities—make it easy—and provide tools, opportunities, and ideas for them.
  
  - Core members and supporters will run the coalition if they are empowered and know they have the support to participate in advocacy.

• **Diversify** the coalition—a coalition is like a community—various voices, with differing opinions—who at the end of the day band to for the common cause.

• Keep coalition members and supporters **engaged** during downtime periods when there is little to no legislative action.
A Coalition Model to Yield Success

Engage
Educate
Ask
Reward
Impact of Advocacy in the Current Political Environment

Influence of Advocacy Communications on Legislators

- In-person meetings
- Individualized letters
- Individualized emails
- Phone calls
- Form letters
- Form emails

Source: Congressional Management Foundation
How to Have the Most Impact

**The ultimate goals of a coalition should be...**

- To impact policymakers by providing them with the information on why your issue/legislation is important.
- Be seen as a pillar of community working to help others in need of assistance.

**Champions...**

- Are highly **committed** to your issue
- Have a compelling **personal story**
- Are willing and eager to get **more involved**

---

**Champions**

- Earned Media
- Personal Letter
- Social Media
- Video Testimonials
- Press Conference
- Town Hall Participant

**Advocates**

- Letter to the Editor
- Personal Letter
- Phone Call
- Email

**Contacts**

- Hill Visits
- Phone Call
- Email