

House Republican Press Release

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Candelora, Fasano Call for Expanded Audit of CAA of New Haven



**Legislators Say Complaints of Improprieties are
Too Great to Ignore**
*Inadequate Financial Controls, Administration of
Energy Assistance Funds Called Into Question*

Hartford, CT – State Senate Minority Leader Pro Tempore Len Fasano (R-North Haven) and State Representative Vincent Candelora (R-North Branford) today called on the Department of Social Services to order an expanded forensic audit of the Community Action Agency (CAA) in New Haven regarding the agency’s administration of LIHEAP (Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program) funds.

For the past several weeks, Senator Fasano and Representative Candelora have talked with current and past CAA employees and have reviewed volumes of documents related to the agencies handling of LIHEAP funds. The legislators say the information they have gathered raises serious concerns about the lack of financial controls at CAA and the improper administration of energy assistance funds. The legislators have received a number of alarming whistleblower complaints about the creation of fake Social Security numbers, questionable accounting practices, unqualified applicants receiving fuel assistance funds, and people who are receiving more than their statutory share of fuel assistance all at the expense of taxpayers and other qualified families in need.

In their brief review, Senator Fasano and Representative Candelora also determined there were at least two applicants receiving LIHEAP who are ineligible to receive the benefit. They also determined that incomplete applications were being approved and that there is a lack of asset verification by management before approving applications.

“CAA has a fiduciary, legal and moral obligation to properly dispense LIHEAP funds to qualified families who cannot afford fuel during the winter. Any transgressions from federal and statutory law will undoubtedly result in eligible people not receiving the benefit of the program,” **said Senator Fasano.** “These whistleblower complaints

and the evidence we've uncovered cannot be ignored. A thorough forensic audit is warranted to either prove the allegations unfounded or validate the claims."

"We are pleased that DSS is committed to ensuring that a system of administering assistance free of fraud is established," **said Representative Candelora.** "While we all want to see everyone who needs heat assistance during the winter receive it, breaking the law by generating fraudulent Social Security numbers enabling illegal immigrants to obtain this assistance is not the way to address the issue."

The legislators said the forensic audit should cover the last three years and include a review of all agency transactions, including: application process from intake to funding; vendor lists; contract payments; signatory on checks; oil deliveries; invoicing and related payments.

Additionally, the legislators have called for:

- DSS to assign a veteran employee to review existing applications and ensure they are processed and funded according to state statute and federal law.
- DSS to demand CAA Board of Directors immediately require the two main administrators of the LIHEAP program be placed on an administrative leave of absence until further notice. There is evidence the two top administrators attempted to stifle employees when this matter became public. The administrators' presence therefore would impair any effort to have an open and fair audit.
- Creation of a CAA Board of Directors in accordance with Connecticut General Statute Section 17b-886.