

S. 2012 – Weatherization Assistance Program, State Energy Program, and State Loan Eligibility

Section 1012 – Weatherization Assistance Program

Reauthorization

This provision reauthorizes the Weatherization Assistance Program (WAP) to extend through 2020 and authorizes appropriations of 350 million dollars for each fiscal year.

Establishment of Competitive Grant Program

This section also establishes a new competitive grant program to expand the number of low-income, single-family, and multi-family homes that receive energy efficiency retrofits. The program would aim to promote innovation within low-income retrofit models, assist participating organizations in evaluating and improving their model low-income retrofit programs, and ensure that those programs become self-sustaining before grant funds are exhausted.

The provision defines several key terms, such as “low income” or a “covered organization” and outlines the process for grant applications and qualified uses for funding. Qualified applicants would be considered for awards based on their past experience and prospects for low-income retrofitted homes, their qualifications and track record with successfully managing Federal funds, the diversity of locations and climates their programs cover, and the amount of non-Federal funding and resources the participant could provide, among other factors. Individual grant funds would be between 1.5 and 5 million, depending on the amount appropriated for the overall WAP program annually.

Specific guidelines for administration of the project would be determined by the Secretary of Energy within 3 months of enactment and draw from applicable provisions governing the Weatherization Assistance Program for Low-Income Persons. The grant program would not affect existing state and local requirements if there were a law that was more stringent than the federal program provisions. The Secretary would submit annual reports to Congress on the energy and cost savings achieved through the program as well as any recommendations for further action.

Funding for the grant program would come from the funds appropriated for the broader WAP. The Secretary would authorize *not less than* 2, 5, or 10 percent of the total WAP funding for the grant program from 2016 to 2020, depending on the total possible increments of funding appropriated for WAP.

Efficiency Standards

This provision outlines the certification and training requirements for participating contractors, project “crew chiefs,” and volunteer laborers. It also establishes minimum efficiency standards for all WAP projects beginning in October 2016 (fiscal year 2017), which are broadly set by the Secretary and established by the industry’s standards for home performance work.

Section 1013 – Reauthorization of State Energy Program

This provision reauthorizes the State Energy Program (SEP) under the Energy Policy and Conservation Act and authorizes appropriations of 90 million dollars for each fiscal year between 2016 and 2020. No more than 5 percent of that funding may be used to provide competitive financial assistance.

Section 4002 – State Loan Eligibility

This provision defines the process for state energy financing institutions to carry out clean energy and energy efficiency projects in partnerships with private and tribal entities, among others, via loan guarantees. By doing so, the provision aims to provide financing support or credit enhancements for eligible products and create liquid markets for eligible projects, particularly through mechanisms such as warehousing and securitization.