

**OPERATION FUEL**  
power for good

# 2022 Legislative Report

# A letter from our Executive Director, Brenda Watson

I ask that you do a bit of impact dreaming with me. Let's imagine together that no one in our family or community is struggling with energy or water poverty. Let's imagine together, that everyone is living in an energy-efficient home. Let's imagine together that everyone in Connecticut has access to solar & backup power during a storm, and that our most vulnerable can afford the cost of home energy and water utilities.

I am proud to share that we at Operation Fuel, work on strengthening our impact every day. Our history is rooted in helping, innovating, and responding to the energy and water utility needs of Connecticut citizens. The last two years have put this foundation to the test. With workforce shortages, infrastructure, natural disasters, difficulty accessing safety nets, and the global pandemic, the team at Operation Fuel continues to suit up and respond.

We launched an online portal, allowing those in need to apply for our programs 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. We launched the Better Homes and Buildings Program, to increase access to energy efficiency programs. We participated in the Public Utility Regulatory Authority's decision to bring a low-income discounted utility rate in Connecticut.



On this year's cover, we wanted to demonstrate our team's efforts and commitment to serving by paying homage to ironworkers in 1932. The iconic photo is a symbol of hope and opportunity in a time of struggle in America. Where many may feel like we are divided, hope for a better future is what binds us, and the ability to help those in need is what inspires us. We are a team, full of hope and inspiration; grateful for the opportunities to strengthen our impact.

We at Operation Fuel, see you on this beam with us. We know you are there, the people we serve know you are there.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Brenda Watson'. The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial 'B' and 'W'.

Brenda Watson

## 2022 Board of Directors

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Thames Valley Council of  
Community Action

Scott Jellison, Co-Chair  
AVANGRID, Inc.

Rauchell Beckford-Anderson,  
Secretary  
Shipman & Goodwin

Lorenzo Wyatt, Treasurer  
Home Comfort Practice

Nick Neeley  
Retired, PURA

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FuelCell Energy

John Bowman  
F.F. Hitchcock

Amy McLean  
Energy Advocate

Peter Ludwig  
Connecticut GreenBank

# Annual Report to The General Assembly

State of Connecticut

For the period: July 1, 2021 - June 30, 2022



This report is presented to the members of the General Assembly as Operation Fuel’s annual account of funds received through the legislatively-established Add-a-Dollar Program, \$2.1 million in ratepayer funds, PURA fines, and all other contributions received in our fiscal year. Beginning July 1, 2021 through June 30, 2022, Operation Fuel provided a total of \$5,215,962 in emergency energy assistance to 6,502 CT households. Using our statewide network of over 60 local fuel banks, we performed intake and case management, benefiting 15,466 individuals. We reviewed all applications to ensure eligibility guidelines were followed before funds were administered, supervised grant distribution, managed fuel vendor and utility company payments, and engaged an accounting firm to audit all elements of its financial operations.



# Introduction:

During the short 2022 legislative session, the Connecticut General Assembly limited public access to the Capitol complex. Supported by our organization's first Policy Intern, Operation Fuel provided verbal and written testimony on eight different bills as committees met remotely. We are grateful to our coalition and legislative partners; together, we passed three laws that directly reflect Operation Fuel's input. In May, our policy team celebrated E-Bike Day at the Capitol – joining other citizens, advocates, vendors, and legislators to explore emerging, affordable transportation options. In the year ahead, we will continue focusing on energy affordability, building efficiency, water affordability, clean energy access, and other issues impacting our clients.



# Legislative Wins In 2022

- **An Act Concerning the Connecticut Clean Air Act.** Public Act 22-25 will increase access to clean transportation options and reduce air pollution in CT. Operation Fuel testified in favor of adding an incentive for e-bikes and increasing benefits to low- and moderate-income residents, including our clients. Picture: Governor Lamont with state legislators, CT DEEP Commissioner Dykes to celebrate the bill's passage.



- **An Act Concerning Membership of the Low-Income Energy Advisory Board.** Public Act 22-105 broadens representation on the state appointed board that oversees CT's federal energy assistance funds. Operation Fuel supported adding members with expertise in green building, housing, medical protection, and water issues.
- **An Act Concerning Shared Clean Energy Facilities.** Public Act 22-14 expands residential solar access, increases project caps, and prioritizes environmental justice communities and low-income residents for solar subscriptions. Operation Fuel testified in favor of several provisions included in the final bill.



# Advocacy:

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**Administrative Engagement:** Operation Fuel supported previous legislation that established a Vision Zero Council in CT, to reduce traffic deaths. We continue to support the council and subcommittees addressing this safety challenge. In 2020, Operation Fuel supported legislation to establish a residential remediation program for households facing barriers to weatherization. We continue advising CT DEEP as they stand up the program and secure funding to expand these services in CT. Additionally, Operation Fuel follows proceedings of CT's Energy Efficiency Board, the Low-Income Energy Advisory Board, and the Comprehensive Energy Strategy.

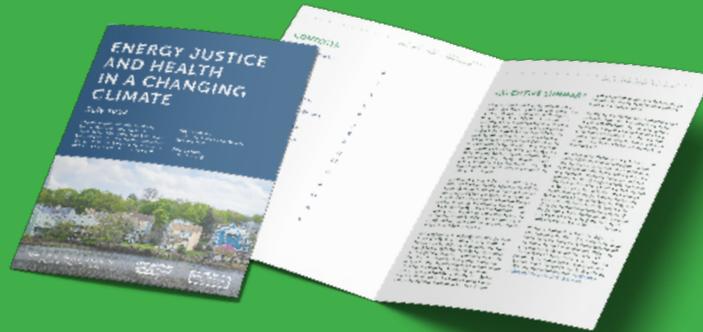
## Utility Regulation:

- In Fiscal Year 2022, the Authority granted Operation Fuel \$2,596,500 from Notices of Violation issued against regulated energy and water companies. These funds support customer assistance, education, and programming.
- Operation Fuel engages in 5-10 PURA dockets at a given time. In 2022, we advocated for changes to make electric bills easier to understand (14-07-19RE06); for a discount rate to provide relief to low-income ratepayers (17-12-03RE11); for improvements to arrearage management plans (22-05-01); and to protect utility customers with financial hardship from service termination (20-03-15).
- In 2023, we will continue following rate cases for both UI (22-08-08) and Aquarion Water (22-07-01); clean energy program reviews for Shared Clean Energy Facilities (22-08-04), residential solar (22-08-02), and battery storage (22-08-05); performance-based regulation (21-05-15); and energy affordability issues broadly.

# Research: Fiscal Year 2022

- This spring, graduate student researchers from Yale University and Vermont Law School collaborated with Operation Fuel as a community partner to examine energy burden in CT. Published in June 2022, *Energy Justice and Health in a Changing Climate* features focus groups with CT residents who struggle with high utility costs.

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read the full  
report?**



**SCAN HERE:**



- Operation Fuel research partners VEIC (Vermont Energy Investment Corporation) will publish an updated affordability study for CT, expected in December 2022. They analyze how energy, housing, transportation, and water costs impact household budgets across the state, including impacts of COVID-19.

# Summary of the Programs Department

## How it Started ...

A commitment to the future, means we must reflect on the past. As the nation's first fuel assistance program, established to provide the working poor with home heating relief, so much about energy has changed. But what remains constant is the annual growing demand for our services.

In FY1992, we reported serving 4,568 households. Direct bill payment assistance to fuel and utility companies totaled \$866,850 dollars as grant amounts did not exceed \$250 dollars. In this same year, the Office of Policy & Management contacted Operation Fuel, seeking our help to support the thousands of CT residents who would lose energy assistance from the federally funded Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) due to federal budget cuts. We were also in a recession with record unemployment. Our resources were limited but with the help of our 50 community fuel banks, we were able to assist an additional 2,000 households that year.

30 years later, we find ourselves in a similar situation. A recession looming, record inflation, high energy and water rates, shortages in fuel and a shortfall in LIHEAP funding. Just know that for as long as Operation Fuel exists, we will work to help those who need support with their home energy and water utilities. We are also committed to the future of energy and its transition from existing systems to clean and renewable sources. We are doing this work by educating and developing our team, increasing our partnerships with organizations committed to energy equity, pursuing local and federal grants that are focused on increasing healthy homes remediation, energy efficiency, solar and energy storage.

Operation Fuel is hard at work, ensuring that the households we serve, are not left behind in the energy transition that we find ourselves in. Therefore, we are doubling down on our commitment to energy parity.



**ELECTRICITY**



**WATER**



**FUEL OIL & GAS  
UTILITY**

**Then vs.  
Now**



# How it's Going ...

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There are roughly 400,000 households in Connecticut that qualify for energy assistance programs due to poverty. It is not known to what extent these same households also struggle with energy burden; however we learned during the Public Utility Regulatory Authority (PURA) investigation into an Equitable Modern Grid, that it is a struggle for vulnerable households to identify resources that can assist them with direct bill payment assistance, weatherization services and access to clean energy products and programs.

Shortly after the opening of the PURA investigation, disparities in energy costs and burdens in frontline communities became prevalent during the economic shutdown caused by COVID-19. Both the PURA investigation and COVID era utility shut off protections prompted system leaders and planners to address the inequities via energy law and regulatory interventions. The State of Connecticut is actively investing in consumer choice, energy affordability and resiliency with the promotion of renewable energy resources, such as wind, solar and now storage. Operation Fuel has expanded its suite of programs to fill in the gaps that exist within our energy systems. We will always stay true to providing direct bill payment assistance for as long as poverty exists. In the meantime, take a look at the additional programs that we now offer.

## Better Homes and Buildings (BHBP)

The program provides a benefit to applicants needing assistance with the remediation of health and safety barriers, ultimately replacing a heating system with a heat pump.

Work may include but not be limited to remediation of health hazards such as moisture, mold, lead, and asbestos.

## Heat Pump Installation Program for Bridgeport Residents

With a grant funded by PSEG, Bridgeport residents will receive outreach and education materials on the benefits of weatherization and heat pump conversion. Residents will be encouraged to utilize existing state resources for health and safety hazard remediation and weatherization; and we will proceed with the installation of 10 heat pumps in single-family homes and multi-family buildings within 18 months of receiving funding, thereby decreasing the energy burden and improving indoor air quality for these Connecticut residents.

## Energy Storage Solutions

In partnership with the CT Greenbank, the program's goal is to provide behind-the-meter battery incentives with the goal to deploy 580 MW of battery storage by the end of 2030, with no less than 40% of residential installations in vulnerable communities, including low-income households. Our role is to help the Greenbank achieve the deployment targets for vulnerable communities and resilience priorities of the program by helping them understand the barriers to adoption and assist with the marketing.



# How it's Going ...

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## Climate Smart Technologies

In collaboration with the Connecticut Insurance Department, CT Greenbank, Yale, and the Clean Energy Group, this project seeks to understand the investment needed in Climate Smart Technology (“CST”), including back-up power (e.g., solar power, battery storage) and stable indoor temperature (e.g., efficient heating and cooling, weatherization) to lead to deployment of such technologies in affordable housing. This may increase the resilience of tenants that are reliant on home medical devices (“HMDs”) for their health, allowing medically vulnerable residents to safely shelter in place. Funded by The Robert Wood Johnson foundation with a matching grant from the CT Greenbank, our role is to provide community outreach in vulnerable communities (e.g., Bridgeport, Hartford, and Waterbury).

## EPA Healthy Communities

This project will focus on increasing the number of low- and moderate-income (LMI) single-family homeowners and tenants of residential units who receive home energy counseling and implement energy efficiency best practices in the New Haven region. Residents will receive outreach materials and one-on-one education on the benefits of health and safety hazard remediation, weatherization, and heat pump conversion.

Residents will also be educated on how to utilize existing state resources for health and safety hazard remediation and weatherization. The project is expected to result in an increase in heat pumps, thereby decreasing the energy burden, carbon footprint, and negative health impacts on these households.

## Yale Tenant Energy Justice Project Advisory Board

Operation Fuel is a member of the advisory board supporting the work of Yale researchers and students leading the Tenant Energy Advocacy (TEA) project. This New Haven-based project aims to identify avenues to engage tenants around home energy efficiency and to bring tenants together to advocate for the implementation of energy efficiency solutions and imagine alternative options. The advisory board guides the research team as they conduct the study, provides feedback about tenant energy justice issues, and helps the research team understand the data. Tenant representatives, local experts, and representatives from local stakeholder organizations, including New Haven-specific organizations such as Neighborhood Housing Services of New Haven, the New Haven Energy Task Force, Witnesses to Hunger, Mothers and Others for Justice, and state-wide organizations such as Operation Fuel and Efficiency for All comprise the advisory board.



# Financials: Fiscal Year 2022

## Statement of Financial Position

For the year ended June 30, 2022

ASSETS	
Cash and Cash Equivalents	\$1,019,909
Marketable Securities	\$1,680,867
Grants and Other Receivables	\$17,882
Prepaid Expenses	\$44,196
Security Deposit	\$3,341
<b>Total Current Assets</b>	<b>\$2,766,195</b>

OTHER ASSETS	
Property and Equipment	\$35,781
<b>Total Assets</b>	<b>\$2,801,976</b>

## Liabilities and Net Assets

For the year ended June 30, 2022

LIABILITIES	
Accounts Payable and Accrued Liabilities	\$104,990
Charitable Gift Annuity Payment	\$5,794
<b>Total Current Liabilities</b>	<b>\$110,784</b>

NET ASSETS	
Unrestricted	\$2,494,674
Temporarily Restricted	\$196,518
<b>Total Assets</b>	<b>\$2,691,192</b>

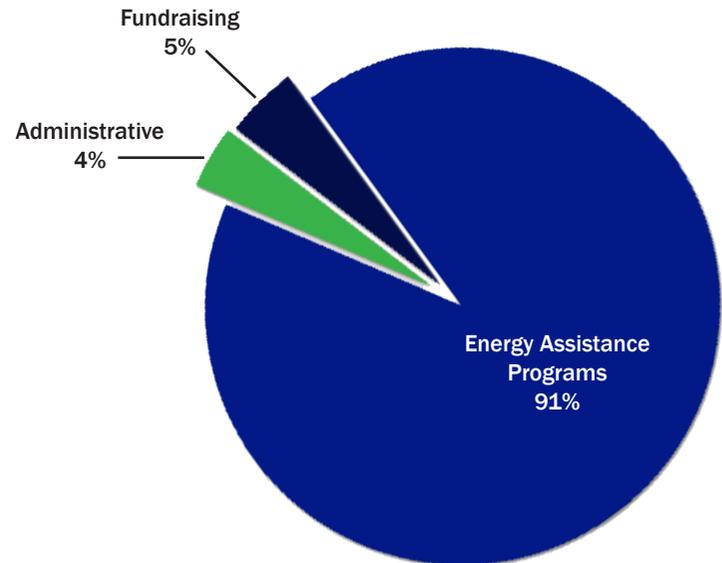
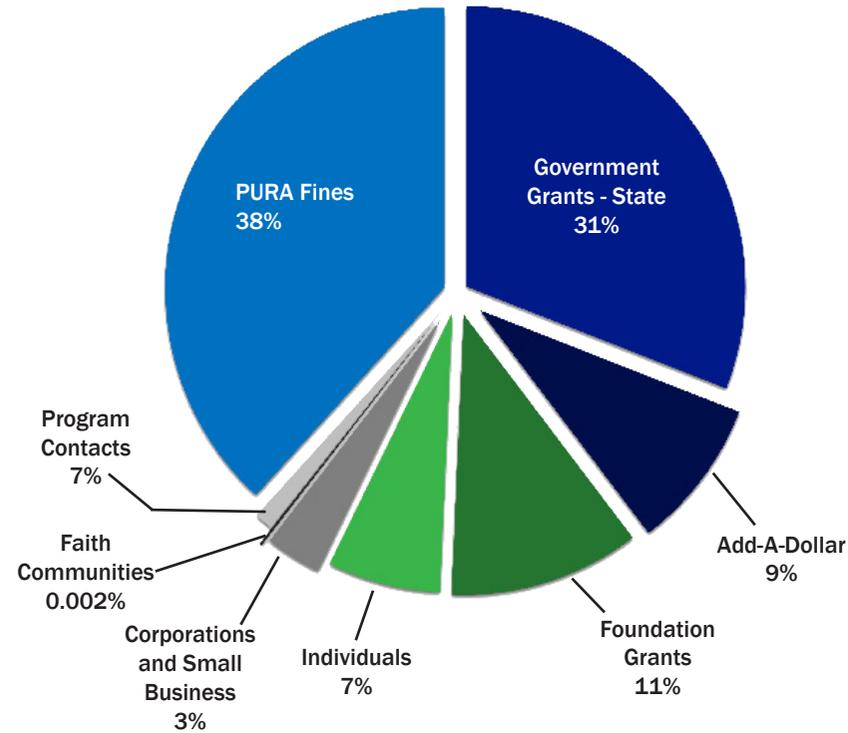
**Total Liabilities and Net Assets** \$2,801,976

## Revenue and Expenses

For the year ended June 30, 2022

REVENUES AND SUPPORT FOR PROGRAMS	
Government Grants - State	\$2,100,000
Add-A-Dollar	\$592,290
Foundation Grants	\$751,851
Individuals	\$444,818
Corporations and Small Businesses	\$222,367
Faith Communities	\$10,779
Program Contacts	\$74,382
PURA Fines	\$2,596,500
Interest and Investment Income	(\$145,009)
<b>Grand Total Revenue and Support</b>	<b>\$6,647,978</b>

EXPENSES	
Energy Assistance Programs	\$6,244,144
Administrative	\$266,902
Fundraising	\$310,254
<b>Total Assets</b>	<b>\$6,821,300</b>





Owner of Home Comfort Practice and board member, Lorenzo Wyatt spoke to CBS News about what residents can do to keep their homes warm this winter.

When CBS news reporter, Meg Oliver, asked why we are seeing an increase in home heating cost, Wyatt responds, “It’s supply and demand. First and foremost, you have a global market for energy; for oil, natural gas, and then those cost have gone up because there are shortages.”

Want to stay up to date with Operation Fuel? Follow us on social media!

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