



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

## *News Release*

# **Over 424,000 CT Households Can't Pay Energy Bills As Energy Affordability Gap Reaches \$608 Million**

**HARTFORD, Conn.** -- Approximately 424,000 Connecticut households face unaffordable home energy costs, according to Operation Fuel's 2023 study [LINK included] "[Mapping Household Cost Burdens May 2023](#): A study of energy, transportation, water, and housing affordability in Connecticut," conducted by the Vermont Energy Investment Corporation (VEIC).

For the first time, the report includes post-pandemic data, and provides [interactive maps](#) that show cost burden by energy, housing, transportation, and water burden by census tract throughout the state. Operation Fuel's report is the first of its kind to examine water affordability for CT households.

The affordability gap is the portion of the energy bill that Connecticut households can't afford to pay, not the entire amount that they owe. The current gap has increased to approximately \$608 million, up 37 percent from \$440 million in 2020. Working families with young children, people with medical conditions, and elderly people who are living on a fixed income, are particularly vulnerable.

Hundreds of thousands of CT families struggling to pay their home energy bills are also facing rising housing, transportation, and water costs. The report found that housing and transportation costs are the largest monthly expenditures for most households, yet little relief is readily available.



Assessing water affordability was particularly difficult due to a lack of data. Recognizing the growing need for water assistance, Operation Fuel began partnering with water companies in 2017. The research demonstrates that over the past 20 years, water rates have been rising faster than inflation and other utility costs.

“Since our last affordability update was released in 2020, Operation Fuel has experienced record demand for energy and water assistance,” explained Roxanna Booth, Interim CEO of Operation Fuel. “As more clients apply for emergency help, we have fewer resources and less time available to help. We will continue to educate the public and partner with stakeholders to help CT families meet their needs.”

Operation Fuel’s Winter/Spring energy assistance program is scheduled to open on January 8<sup>th</sup>, 2024. Water assistance is available year-round, as funding allows.

For the full VEIC report, go to <https://operationfuel.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/VEIC-affordability-study-May-2023.pdf>

To review the affordability gaps and cost burdens by census tract on the report’s interactive maps, go to <https://operationfuel.org/veicmap/>.

**ABOUT OPERATION FUEL:** Operation Fuel is Connecticut’s emergency energy assistance organization, providing help with electricity, water, natural gas, oil, and other energy bills to residents across the state. Thanks to supporters and donors, Operation Fuel flips the switch for families, helping seniors, children, and people with medical conditions stay warm, keep the lights



on, power devices for cooking and refrigeration, and have access to running water for drinking, hygiene, and laundry. To help power families, you can visit the website and donate or text OPFUEL to 44321.