

The Honorable Kathy Castor (D-FL)

- 1. Mayor Turner, you have been an advocate for increased investments in weatherization of buildings for years. Was lack of weatherization part of the problem? Please tell us more about the energy efficiency needs of Houston homes and businesses.**

Although Texas was the first state to adopt Energy Efficiency Resource Standards (EERS), the state's energy efficiency goal has not been increased since it was adopted in 1999 and Texas now lags far behind other states. According to the American Council for an Energy Efficient Economy (ACEEE), Texas' energy efficiency targets are some of the lowest in the nation and, as a result, Texas realizes low levels of electricity savings compared to the national average.

This is especially true in low-income communities where residents spend a disproportionate portion of their income on energy. According to the Texas Energy Poverty Research Institute (TEPRI), the bottom 30% of household earnings in Harris County (earning less than \$17,575 per year) spend 13% of their income on energy versus 1% for households earning above the median income. Additionally, homes in low-income communities often need basic repairs before they are eligible for energy efficiency or weatherization programs. Lack of funding for those basic repairs or deferred maintenance, some of which can be attributed to repetitive flooding or hurricane events, keeps Houstonians from being eligible for existing weatherization programs. In the Houston area, existing utility energy efficiency programs have struggled to address these issues and spending for low-income programs lags far behind spending in other states' cities (more than 5 times less than utilities in Chicago and Boston).

With current State of Texas funding levels, energy efficiency programs provided by the electric utility servicing the Houston area are only able to serve less than 5,000 homes per year, of which the vast majority are multi-family retrofits. Department of Energy weatherization programs lack any mechanism to address the households in Houston who have of basic repairs and deferred maintenance needs that keep them from being eligible for Federal weatherization programs. Without a comprehensive assessment and plan to address maintenance and recovery concerns, these families remain at higher risk and are more susceptible to extreme heat and cold. Deferred maintenance has been identified as the biggest need by our Housing and Community Development Department as well as many of our community partners. Our community partners have also expressed concern that the Winter Storm Relief Fund capped at \$6,000 does not sufficiently address the needs of Houston home-owners impacted.

As we saw with Winter Storm Uri, there is an increasing need for weatherization and energy efficiency programs across Texas. Over 50,000 single-family homes in the Houston area suffered from burst pipes, which could have been avoided with more investment in weatherization programs and a more holistic approach to energy efficiency. In addition to extreme cold conditions, Houston has notable extreme heat conditions that are expected to increase in the coming decades. Houston's recent urban heat island effect mapping shows a 17-degree difference in temperature for different neighborhoods in Houston on the same summer afternoon. Additionally, Houston's Climate Impact Assessment also shows the length of summer

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increasing, the days per year above 100 degrees and the nights per year above 80 degrees all increasing given either a higher or lower emissions scenario.

Additional investments to directly support communities to improve weatherization, especially for our most vulnerable to better alleviate energy poverty and increase community resilience in communities that are repeatedly impacted by extreme weather and climate change.