



Fact Sheet on Energy Equity

An Introduction to Energy Poverty

Energy is an increasingly important social and public health concern for more and more North Carolinians.

As costs for residential heating, cooling, and other household energy needs increase significantly, they account for a greater percentage of household budgets. This is referred to as energy poverty or energy insecurity.

Those impacted by energy insecurity allocate a higher share of their incomes to their utility expenses—partly because of rising energy costs and partly because of the energy inefficiencies of many lower income homes.

Low-income homes tend to be older homes with appliances that are not energy efficient and lack proper insulation to slow heat loss in colder months.

The energy poor may be homeowners who are unable to invest in energy-efficient upgrades because of high up-front costs or may be renters living in homes where landlords do not pay the utility bills and thus have little incentive to create more energy-efficient units.

How Energy Poverty Impacts N. Carolina

When families with limited financial means are faced with high-energy bills they can't afford, they have to make serious choices about the bills they pay each month. They may have to cut back on essentials like food, medicine, and transportation in order to keep the lights and heat on.

This heat or eat dilemma facing many North Carolina residents happens when they pay a disproportionate portion of their incomes on their energy expenses—usually more than 10 percent.

Many low-income families in North Carolina spend 20 percent or more each month on these costs. In fact, more

than 1.5 million households needed assistance to pay their energy bills in the past year thanks in part to energy poverty.

However, only about 1 in 10 of those households received the life-saving assistance they needed—and usually for only one month on average.

N. Carolina Energy Poverty Facts & Figures*

- 286,539 households living below 50% of the federal poverty level spent 29% of their annual incomes on energy bills
- 371,583 households living within 50-100% of the federal poverty level spent 16% of their annual incomes on energy bills
- 207,464 households living within 100-125% of the federal poverty level spent 11% of their annual incomes on energy bills

The Federal Home Energy Assistance Program helped cover 90,528 heating and cooling bills for low-income households in 2016.

About Renewable Energy

Using renewable energy sources like wind, solar, geothermal, hydroelectric, and biomass to generate more of the country's electricity can:

- Reduce global-warming CO2 emissions and related health issues, including breathing problems, neurological disorders, heart attacks, and cancer
- Improve the economy by creating jobs: On average, more jobs are created for each unit of electricity generated from renewable energy sources.
- Help stabilize energy prices in the future because of its renewability

About Energy Efficiency

- Energy efficiency means using less energy to perform the same function in homes and businesses.. For instance, appliances are energy efficient when they use less gas or electricity to accomplish the same task as a less energy-efficient model.
- Increasing energy efficiency in lower income housing is a practical solution for reducing energy poverty in North Carolina because less energy-efficient homes and appliances use more energy to perform the same function as their more energy-efficient counterparts.
- Here are some ways to increase energy efficiency in lower income housing:
 - Use Energy Star appliances, which guarantees a certain level of energy efficiency
 - Take advantage of tax savings for making energy-efficient upgrades to appliances, windows, and doors
 - Add insulation to your walls and attic to prevent loss of warm air in the winter and cool air in the summer

Join RETI (the Renewable Energy Transition Initiative) to reduce energy poverty in North Carolina.

Our Mission

The Renewable Energy Transition Initiative (RETI) aims to sustainably decrease the energy costs of low-income families. Through general awareness programs and educational programs throughout Charlotte-Mecklenburg and surrounding areas, the organization readies children, teens, and adults for the adoption of clean energy technologies, such as the installation of solar panels in their homes.

We are working to:

- Decrease the energy costs of low-income families through the adoption of renewable, clean-energy technologies
- Educate residents on renewable energy solutions and encouraging the use of energy-efficient technologies

Please help us bring energy equity to every household in our state by supporting legislation that promotes lower energy costs and increases the availability of renewable energy solutions across the state.

*Source: Home Energy Affordability Gap 2016, Fisher, Sheehan & Colton



Talking Points on Energy Equity

Key Message: What is Energy Poverty?

- As costs for residential heating, cooling, and other household energy needs increase significantly, they account for a greater percentage of household budgets (usually more than 10%). This is referred to as energy poverty or energy insecurity.
- Those impacted by energy insecurity allocate a higher share of their incomes to their utility expenses thanks to rising energy costs and energy inefficiencies of lower income homes.
- Low-income homes tend to be older with appliances that are not energy efficient and lack proper insulation to slow heat loss in colder months.
- 371,583 households living within 50-100% of the federal poverty level spent 16% of their annual incomes on energy bills
- 207,464 households living within 100-125% of the federal poverty level spent 11% of their annual incomes on energy bills
- The Federal Home Energy Assistance Program helped cover 90,528 heating and cooling bills for low-income households in 2016.
- More than 1.5 million households needed assistance to pay their energy bills in the past year thanks in part to energy poverty.

Key Message: How Energy Poverty Impacts North Carolina

- When families with limited financial means are faced with high-energy bills they can't afford, they have to make serious choices about the bills they pay each month.
- They may have to cut back on essentials like food, medicine, and transportation in order to keep the lights and heat on. This can be detrimental to the health of these populations.

North Carolina Energy Poverty Facts & Figures*

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- However, only about 1 in 10 of those households received the life-saving assistance they needed—and usually for only one month on average.

Key Message: How Renewable Energy Can Help North Carolinians

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Key Message: How Energy Efficiency Can Help North Carolinians

- Energy efficiency means using less energy to perform the same function in homes and businesses.. For instance, appliances are energy efficient when they use less gas or electricity to accomplish the same task as a less energy-efficient model.
- Increasing energy efficiency in lower income housing is a practical solution for reducing energy poverty in North Carolina because less energy-efficient homes and appliances use more energy to perform the same function as their more energy-efficient counterparts.
- Here are some ways to increase energy efficiency in lower income housing:
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Phone Script for Setting Up an Appointment

Hello.

I am [first and last name] from [town/city]. I will be in Raleigh on (date) and would like to set up time to meet with [Senator, Representative] [Last Name] or a representative from your staff regarding energy equity in North Carolina.

I am a citizen concerned over the number of people in our state that pay a disproportionate amount of their monthly incomes for energy costs—usually 10 percent or more. This is known as energy poverty.

When families with limited financial means are faced with high-energy bills they can't afford, they have to make serious choices about the bills they pay each month. They may have to cut back on essentials like food, medicine, and transportation in order to keep the lights and heat on.

I would like to discuss how the [Senator, Representative] can help these energy poor families through legislation that promotes lower energy costs and energy efficiency and increases the availability of renewable energy solutions across the state.

Is someone available the afternoon of the (date)? If no one is available, I would like to drop by the office anyway to leave some information for the (elected official) to review.

Thank you.



Appointment Request

The Honorable [Legislator Name]
North Carolina General Assembly
Raleigh, N.C.

Dear [Representative or Senator Last Name]:

I am a constituent in your district and would like to set up a time to meet with you regarding energy equity in North Carolina. I am a citizen concerned over the number of people in our state that pay a disproportionate amount of their monthly incomes for energy costs—usually 10 percent or more. This is known as energy poverty.

When families with limited financial means are faced with high-energy bills they can't afford, they have to make serious choices about the bills they pay each month. They may have to cut back on essentials like food, medicine, and transportation in order to keep the lights and heat on.

I would like to discuss how we can help these energy poor families through legislation that promotes lower energy costs and energy efficiency and increases the availability of renewable energy solutions across the state. I am available to meet with you at your district office in [location] on [date(s)].

Thank you in advance for your consideration of this meeting request. I will contact your office soon to determine your availability. Or you may contact me at [phone number] or [e-mail address].

Best,

[Your First and Last Name]
[Address]



Sorry We Missed You Letter

The Honorable [Legislator Name]
North Carolina General Assembly
Raleigh, N.C.

Dear [Representative or Senator Last Name]:

I am sorry I was unable to meet with you or your staff during my visit to [the state capitol, your district office, etc.]. I am a constituent in your district and hoped to meet with you regarding energy equity in North Carolina.

There is a growing number of people in our state that pay a disproportionate amount of their monthly incomes for energy costs—usually 10 percent or more—which is known as energy poverty.

When families with limited financial means are faced with high-energy bills they can't afford, they have to make serious choices about the bills they pay each month. They may have to cut back on essentials like food, medicine, and transportation in order to keep the lights and heat on.

I am leaving you with some information on energy poverty and how we can work to solve this issue through legislation that promotes lower energy costs and energy efficiency and increases the availability of renewable energy solutions across the state.

Thank you in advance for reviewing this information. I hope you will call on me if you need any additional information on energy equity in North Carolina. In addition, I will schedule an appointment with you soon, so we can discuss this important issue in person.

Best,

[Your First and Last Name]

[Address]



Follow-Up Letter

The Honorable [Legislator Name]
North Carolina General Assembly
Raleigh, N.C.

Dear [Representative or Senator Last Name]:

Thank you for taking time out of your busy schedule to meet with me regarding energy equity in North Carolina. I enjoyed learning more about you and hope that you found the information I provided on this important issue to be both informative and impactful.

I am committed to working with you and organizations like the Renewable Energy Transition Initiative (RETI) to lower energy costs and increase the availability of renewable energy solutions across the state.

Using renewable energy sources like wind, solar, geothermal, hydroelectric, and biomass to generate more of the country's electricity can:

- Reduce global-warming CO₂ emissions and related health issues, including breathing problems, neurological disorders, heart attacks, and cancer
- Improve the economy by creating jobs: On average, more jobs are created for each unit of electricity generated from renewable energy sources.
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Thank you again for meeting with me. I am available to be of assistance when you need reliable information on energy poverty and how to solve the issue soon. I look forward to staying in touch to provide you with updated information as it becomes available. And I hope you will call on me if you feel there is relevant legislation before the [Senate, House].

Best,

[Your First and Last Name]
[Address]