

State Energy Efficiency Policy for Climate, Health, and Equity:

A FACT SHEET FOR HEALTH PROFESSIONALS

A substantial amount of the electricity consumed in the U.S. is wasted through transmission, heat loss, and inefficient technology. This wasted energy costs families and businesses money, and leads to increased greenhouse gas emissions and air pollution. These impacts, particularly increased greenhouse gases and air pollution, come with substantial costs to our health and to the environment. Significant reductions in illness and deaths can be achieved if we improve energy efficiency. As a result, health professionals should have a prominent voice in energy efficiency policy conversations.

Given ongoing policy gridlock at the federal level and the Administration's rollback of federal efforts to address climate change, more attention is shifting to state legislatures as venues for energy efficiency policy. States can lead the way on energy efficiency, but they can also be venues for detrimental legislation.

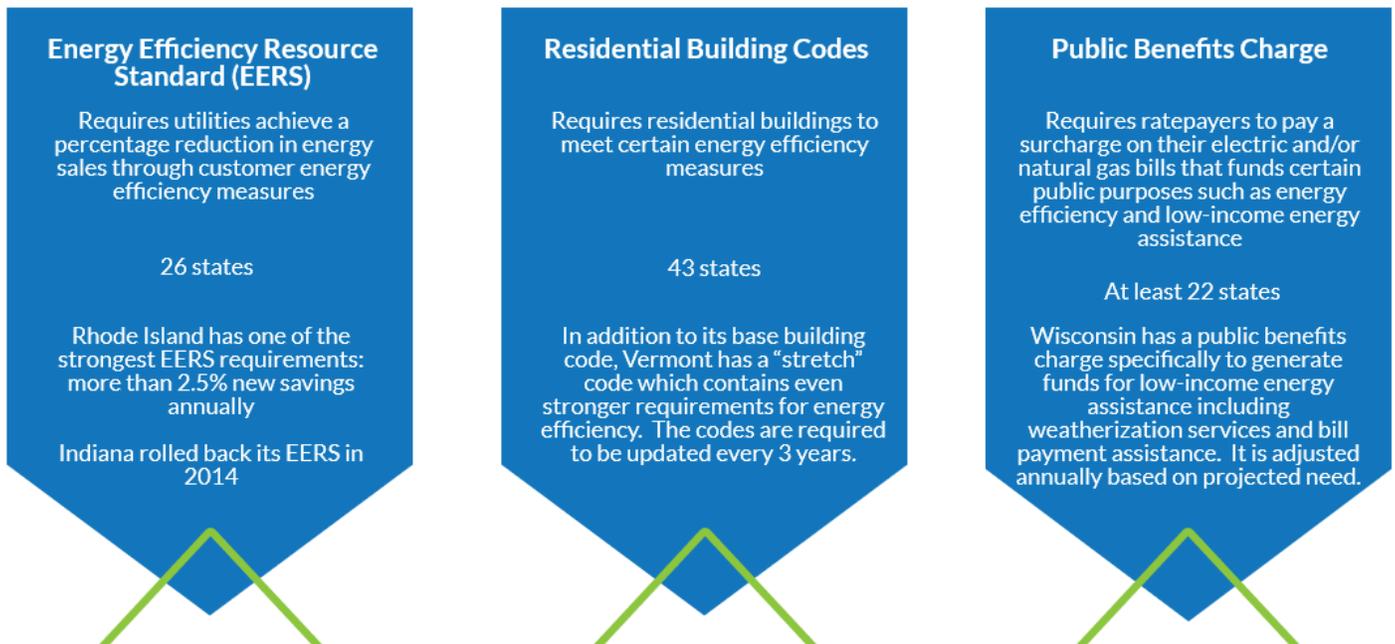
To assist you in making your voice heard in energy efficiency policy conversations at the state level, this fact sheet summarizes some of the significant state energy efficiency policies, offers key messages to use in advocating for state energy efficiency policy, and points to additional information and resources.

State Energy Efficiency Policy

State energy efficiency policy takes a variety of forms. Many states require or encourage utilities to reduce energy usage through energy efficiency. Most states require energy efficiency through building codes for residential and/or commercial buildings. Other state energy efficiency policies provide financial incentives and assistance such as grants, loans, or rebates for energy efficiency improvements. States commonly fund this assistance directly or through a surcharge on utility customers.

Many states target energy efficiency financial assistance to low- and moderate-income households who face a greater "energy burden" (percentage of income spent on energy utilities). This assistance commonly provides for home weatherization services, other home energy efficiency improvements (e.g. energy efficient lighting and appliances), and even direct payment of utility bills. Although not energy efficiency per se, utility bill assistance provides a backstop to utility disconnection when energy efficiency improvements are not enough to reduce the "energy burden" for low-income households. States also receive funds from the federal government for low-income energy assistance and efforts are underway to link this assistance with addressing other health and safety issues in low-income homes such as lead hazard control.

A few of the specific energy efficiency policies particularly important climate, health, and equity are highlighted below with a description of the policy, how many states currently have the policy in place, and a specific example.



Using Your Voice To Influence State Energy Efficiency Policy

As a health professional, you have an important voice to bring to state energy efficiency policy conversations. You witness the health impacts of energy policy on a regular basis (e.g. treating asthma attacks exacerbated by air pollution from burning fossil fuels or working with families choosing between paying their electricity bill and buying groceries). Your professional experience and the stories of what you are seeing on the ground are the best advocacy tools you have to influence decision-makers. To supplement your own experiences and stories, we've provided some specific guidance on what types of state energy efficiency policies to support or oppose and some key messages on energy efficiency, climate, health, and equity. You can use this information when contacting or meeting with state legislators, testifying on a bill, writing op-eds, or engaging in other advocacy on state energy efficiency policy.

Support state energy efficiency policies that...

Oppose state energy efficiency policies that...

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish/strengthen requirements for energy efficiency (e.g. building code requirements) • Ensure the benefits of energy efficiency reach low- and moderate-income households (e.g. home weatherization funds for these households) • Ensure low- and moderate-income households are protected when energy efficiency isn't enough to reduce their "energy burden" (e.g. low-income utility bill payment assistance and policies that prevent utilities from being shut off in times of extreme cold and heat) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Repeal/weaken energy efficiency requirements • Reduce access/funding to energy efficiency improvements for low- and moderate-income households • Reduce access/funding for alternatives to utility shut-off when energy efficiency is not enough to reduce the "energy burden," particularly in times of extreme cold or heat (e.g. reducing funds for low-income utility bill payment assistance) |
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KEY TALKING POINTS

- Climate change is the greatest public health challenge of the 21st century. Energy production is one of the largest sources of climate pollution in the U.S., responsible for nearly 1/3 of greenhouse gas emissions (GHGE). Reducing the amount of energy needed through energy efficiency measures is an important strategy to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and avoid the worst climate and health impacts.
- Current energy production is also a major source of air, water, and soil pollution, and harms our health in many ways. Low income communities and communities of color are disproportionately burdened by these impacts. Improving energy efficiency can help reduce these impacts in addition to reducing greenhouse gases.
- Energy efficiency can also help reduce energy costs, which is particularly important for low-income families who typically spend a higher proportion of their income on energy – up to three times as much as other households in many urban areas. Where energy efficiency improvements do not adequately reduce the “energy burden” for low-income households, energy bill assistance and utility shut-off protections are critical lifelines.
- Households facing higher “energy burdens” may cut back on necessary energy use and inadequately heat, cool, and light their homes, which can result in increased cases of asthma, respiratory problems, heart disease, arthritis, and mental health problems. In some cases, households may be forced to choose between heating and eating or other vital necessities, including medicines and the use of necessary medical equipment

Visit the US Climate and Health Alliance State Policy Initiative [website](#) for more information on how you can take action, as well as tools to help you along the way.