

September 21, 2005

To: Ms. Marilyn Daumiller
LFD

From: Hank Hudson
Administrator

Subject: Legislative Finance Committee information request on Energy Ombudsman Services

The Legislative Finance Committee has asked for information concerning our implementation of HB 2 funded services, one of which is the Energy Ombudsman Services.

Contracts were mailed out in August to the state's ten (10) Human Resource Development Council (HRDCs) identified in HB 2 as the agencies to receive these funds. To date, three (3) have been returned. The committee may be interested in viewing a work plan from one of the local agencies (attached).

Other than the slow response from some of the agencies, the only other delay we have encountered is a suggestion from one of them that we amend our contracts to allow them to serve persons up to 185% of poverty, rather than the 150% of poverty we had stipulated. We chose 150% because that is the eligibility level for the federal Low Income Energy Assistance Program (LIEAP). The suggestor felt that the HB 2 funds should be used to help people who may, in fact, not be eligible for LIEAP but were still in need of help. They stated that their testimony to the appropriations subcommittee reflected that and I do remember that testimony. So, even though the language in HB 2 says only "low income customers", we will be amending the contracts to reflect the higher percentage.

We have laid out for the HRDCs that we need some substantive data from them to measure how this program is impacting the lives of the clients they will be serving and anticipate that the information will be useful to the legislature and us as we evaluate the success of the program.

As the winter heating season progresses, the HRDCs will be working with clients for a number of programs relating to heating assistance. The ombudsmen services portion of their efforts will become more active when that happens.

At this time, we have no suggestions for the legislature as to how their involvement might be needed but may at a future date.

If you have any questions or comments, please call me at 444-5902.