Dollar Energy Fund Opens 2026–2027 Hardship Program for Ohio Households

Grants Now Available for Income-Eligible Families, With Expanded Funding for Ohio Power Company Customers

COLUMBUS, OH, UNITED STATES, October 1, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Dollar Energy Fund's 2026–2027 Hardship Program opens today and is accepting applications from households that are currently experiencing a utility termination or have a pending termination of their service. A grant from the program is applied directly to a customer's utility account, enabling them to maintain or restore basic gas, electric, water or wastewater service. Applications will be accepted on a first-come, first-served basis through September 30, 2027, while funds are available.

The Hardship Program helps limited-income individuals, families and senior citizens who are struggling to keep up with basic household expenses. Many recipients have employment income or receive retirement or disability benefits but may not qualify for state or federal assistance programs. For these households, Dollar Energy Fund often serves as a final option when other resources are limited.

This year, more help is available than ever before for customers of Ohio Power Company (formerly AEP Ohio). In August, Ohio Power Company and five data center companies with operations in the state (Meta, QTS, Amazon, SoftBank Energy and Google) committed more than $18 million in additional funding to the Neighbor to Neighbor Program, which is administered by Dollar Energy Fund. The new funding has allowed the program to expand its guidelines so that more Ohio families can qualify for assistance. During the 2025–2026 program year, more than 2,600 Ohio households received a combined $818,000 in assistance.

"Last year, the need for help reached levels we had never seen before, and we expect that need to continue as families keep facing higher costs for housing, food and utilities," said Chad Quinn, Chief Executive Officer of Dollar Energy Fund. "Thanks to the generous commitments from Ohio Power Company and data center partners, we can reach significantly more Ohio families this year. We encourage anyone facing a shutoff or struggling to keep up with their utility bills to seek assistance as soon as possible."

Customers facing a utility crisis should begin by contacting their utility provider, which can help determine eligibility and provide information about the assistance programs available for customers in need.

New this year, customers can apply for assistance through MyApp Connect, Dollar Energy Fund's new online platform launching today alongside the new program year. MyApp Connect makes assistance more accessible by allowing customers to apply anytime, from any device, using one application and one set of income documentation across all participating utility programs, rather than repeating the process for each. More information is available at MyAppConnect.com.

Customers who prefer to apply in person can complete an application through one of Dollar Energy Fund's community-based agencies. Customers can ask their utility provider for a referral to a participating agency or use Dollar Energy Fund's Agency Finder at www.dollarenergy.org/agency to find a location near them. In addition to application assistance, these local partners can connect families with other resources, including financial counseling, transportation assistance, childcare support and housing services.

Dollar Energy Fund administers three hardship programs in Ohio. Income limits vary by utility and are based on the Federal Poverty Income Guidelines:

- Neighbor to Neighbor Program: Newly expanded for Ohio Power Company customers with household income up to 300 percent and a balance at least 30 days past due. Eligible households may receive a grant of up to $500.
- Northeast Ohio Natural Gas: For Northeast Ohio Natural Gas customers with household income up to 250 percent. Eligible households may receive a grant of up to $500.
- Ohio Utility Assistance Program: For customers of Ohio Power Company, Columbia Gas of Ohio, Duke Energy and Enbridge Gas, with household income between 175 percent and 250 percent. Eligible households may receive up to $300 per utility, or up to $600 for both gas and electric service.

Each grant covers the exact amount needed to prevent or restore service, up to a maximum set by each utility. Additional eligibility guidelines may include a household demonstrating a sincere effort to pay their utility bills over the past three months and having an outstanding balance on their account. Applicants may also be required to first seek available assistance from federal and state programs if they meet the eligibility criteria.

Guidelines and program details are subject to change throughout the program year. The most up-to-date information can be found at www.dollarenergy.org/need-help.

Across the country, Dollar Energy Fund provided $37.3 million in hardship grants to more than 76,000 households last year. Throughout more than 40 years of operation and across its 18-state service area, Dollar Energy Fund has provided more than $400 million in grants to over one million households, positioning itself as a national leader in utility assistance program administration.

The organization relies on public contributions, with utility partners providing dollar-for-dollar

matching funds to maximize the impact of each dollar donated. Contributions can be made online at www.dollarenergy.org/donate, by sending a check to Box 42329, Pittsburgh, PA 15203, or through participating monthly utility bills. All donations are tax-deductible, and 100 percent of donations to the Neighbor to Neighbor Program are used to assist limited-income families in Ohio.

For more information about Dollar Energy Fund, how to apply for utility assistance, or how to make a donation, please visit www.dollarenergy.org.

About Dollar Energy Fund, Inc.

Dollar Energy Fund was founded in 1983 and has grown to become the largest hardship fund in Pennsylvania and one of the largest programs of its kind in the United States. Dollar Energy Fund is a 501(c)(3) organization in the state of Pennsylvania. Since 1983, the organization has provided more than $400 million in utility assistance grants to more than one million limited-income families and individuals. In addition to Pennsylvania, the organization assists limited-income households in Arkansas, California, Connecticut, Hawaii, Illinois, Indiana, Louisiana, Maryland, Massachusetts, Nebraska, New Mexico, Ohio, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia, Washington and West Virginia. Individuals interested in contributing to Dollar Energy Fund can do so through their utility bills, by sending donations directly to Box 42329, Pittsburgh, PA 15203, or through the organization's website. Additional information can be found at www.dollarenergy.org.

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