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Company: OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR
Fax #: 8037345167

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May 4, 2016

The Honorable Nikki R. Haley
Office of the Governor
1205 Pendleton Street
Columbia, South Carolina 29201

SENT VIA FAX 803.734.5167

Re: Pee Dee Utility Assistance Program and Weatherization Assistance Program

Dear Governor Haley:

We are writing this letter to provide you some insight on the above programs and to request your assistance. We are past Maryland residents and moved to your great state of South Carolina. Although since we have been here some events and temporary set backs have occurred out of our control but life is good, we are adapting and plan on staying.

I would like to start by giving you and South Carolina kudo's for the programs the state offers. Your involvement and dedication to the people is exceptional. You are an approachable and caring person and it shows. Fortunately our home was not damaged by the floods so I cannot speak on behalf of the people who used the programs and assistance you put in place. However, I saw Governor who truly cared was involved and moved very quickly to help those in need.

Based on my experiences, and I think this is true in all professions, when a program is put in place it is sometimes structured from an overall perspective and the actual user base test are overlooked. We assume everyone is on the same page and miss the education part that I could not do your job anymore then you could have done my previous experience with a mechanical contractor.

Last October we purchased a very inexpensive foreclosed home in Lakeview (Dillon County). The previous owners removed the heat and air-conditioning system, hot water heaters and kitchen appliances. Since December I have been leaving messages for James Hillian (843.320.9760 ext. 2110) at the Dillon County Weatherization Department. He left me a message at the beginning of this month stating that he has been out of town. Unfortunately since then I have not been able to get back in touch with him. I spoke to his assistant and explained the situation and our need for assistance through this program. After all this time of waiting for return phone call I was informed that South Carolina no longer has this program and of the state ran out of money in 2012. None of the websites that I did my research on indicated that this program was no longer available. This made even less sense after I found the 2016 Weatherization Assistance Program Final Plan. Is this a training issue and if Mr. Hillian is the administrator for this in Dillon County why is he always out of town and you can not contact him?

Our next experience was with the Pee Dee Community Action office at 126 North Macarthur Avenue (843.774.9038) in Dillon. I called several weeks ago to see if we needed to make an appointment and what was needed to apply for assistance. We were told that no appointment was needed and to bring SC drivers license, our utility bills and the names and addresses had to match. On Monday, May 2 we got to the office in Dillon around 3 PM. The office doors were locked there were no hours on the doors and no one answered the phones. I called the office on Tuesday and was informed that their computer systems were down so they left the office. There was no note on the door and no hours posted. There were several other people who showed up at the office and did not understand why they were closed. We needed emergency assistance with our utility bills. We were told that the only way we could apply was to come back to the office bring Social Security cards, a letter from the unemployment office stating we have no income and our utility bill. The only help they can give us is with the electric. Individuals who need this assistance are low income and have minimal funds. My suggestion would be to structure this the same as other benefits where you can complete the application online, fax or email the background documents and if necessary have a phone interview.

The South Carolina Office of Economic Opportunity website (<http://oeo.sc.gov/index.html>) has links to the county Community Action offices. I went to each county that had their website address posted. Each one is different, some have not been updated since 2010, links don't work, Beaufort/Jasper Economic Opportunity Commission, Inc. is just a log in page. There is no consistency.

Again please don't take this letter as just complaining. We wanted to provide you insight based on our experience with these programs. We are also asking for your assistance in getting the needed items for our house and assistance with utility bills.

We can be contacted at 240-439-0270 or waynemolineu@aol.com

Please contact me if you want to discuss this further or need additional information and insight on the programs.

Sincerely,

Virginia Merrigan and Wayne Molineu
PO Box 175, Lakeview, SC 29563

cc by fax:

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