Be Utility Wise

WILKES-BARRE SCRANTON

2026

Building Connections to Affordability: Collaborative Strategies for Lasting Change



Mohegan Sun - Conference Center
1280 Highway 315, Wilkes-Barre, PA 18702

Building Connections to Affordability: Collaborative Strategies for Lasting Change

Registration & Breakfast
8 - 8:30 a.m.

Welcome
8:30 - 8:35 a.m.

Strategies to Keep Families Connected to Utility Service
8:35 - 9:05 a.m.

Affordability First:
Exploring Utility Assistance Programs & BUW BINGO
9:05 - 9:50 a.m.

Break
9:50 - 10 a.m.

LIHEAP Update
10 - 10:30 a.m.

Are You Getting What You Pay For?
10:30 - 11:15 a.m.

Winter Energy Pricing and Regulatory Insights
11:15 - 11:45 a.m.

Sustaining the Helper: Wellness and Mental Health for the Provider
11:45 a.m. - 12:15 p.m.

Lunch
12:15 - 1:15 p.m.

Introduction to Commission on Economic Opportunity Programs
1:15 - 1:45 p.m.

Working Effectively with People with Disabilities:
Practical Strategies and Community Resources
1:45 - 2:15 p.m.

Legal Help is Just a Click Away
2:15 - 2:45 p.m.

A Day in the Life: Responding to Domestic Violence
2:45 - 3:15 p.m.

Complete Program Evaluations, Closing & Raffle
3:15 - 3:30 p.m.

AGENDA



8 - 8:30 a.m. **Registration, Breakfast & Networking**

8:30 - 8:35 a.m. **Welcome**

Christina Chase-Pettis, Sr. Communications Specialist, PAPUC

8:35 - 9:05 a.m. **Strategies to Keep Families Connected to Utility Service**

Giovanna Ortiz, Special Projects Manager, PA Utility Law Project

Join the Pennsylvania Utility Law Project (PULP) for a primer on how to keep families connected to essential electric, heat, and water services. In this interactive session, participants will learn about the impact of utility insecurity and the legal protections that can keep families connected.

9:05 - 9:50 a.m. **Affordability First: Exploring Utility Assistance Programs & Be Utility Wise BINGO**

Kristen Kelly, Regulatory Programs Manager, PPL
Michael Schilthuis, Manager Universal Services, UGI
Brian P. Ravel, Senior Customer Outreach Representative, UGI
Dorothy Grill, Customer Assistance Program Specialist, PA American Water Company

Join us for an engaging session with representatives from electric, gas, and water utility companies. They will offer a comprehensive overview of their assistance programs and grant funding options designed to enhance affordability for customers. This panel will highlight how these organizations collaborate to address community needs effectively.

Be prepared for some interactive fun with rounds of BUW Bingo throughout the presentations. Don't miss this opportunity to learn and enjoy yourself!

9:50 - 10 a.m. **Break**

10 - 10:30 a.m. **LIHEAP Update**

Erin McNulty, LIHEAP Coordinator, Luzerne County Assistance Office
Kimberly Hillard, Income Maintenance Administrator 1, Department of Human Services

Representatives from the Department of Human Services (DHS) and the Luzerne County Assistance Office will provide in-depth updates on the Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) for the upcoming LIHEAP season. This session will deliver the latest program guidelines, eligibility requirements, application process and any changes to benefits to ensure understanding and access to the LIHEAP.

10:30 - 11:15 a.m. **Are You Getting What You Pay For?**

Mary Bach, AARP Pennsylvania Volunteer, Chair, Consumer Issues Task Force

Do you ever feel "ripped off" when shopping? Do you understand Pennsylvania's amusing and confusing sales tax applications? When you fill your tank with a gallon of gas, how can you be sure that's what you received? Have you noticed that product packaging seems to be shrinking while prices stay the same? Do you find yourself hunting for prices while shopping, or have you ever been overcharged at a checkout scanner? Your shopping trips will never be the same after this entertaining and educational presentation packed with important consumer information.

Join us for an engaging and informative presentation, this session promises to be both entertaining and enlightening!

11:15 - 11:45 a.m. **Winter Energy Pricing & Regulatory Insights**

Dan Mumford, Director, Office of Competitive Market Oversight, PAPUC

This PUC regulatory update will include important information about utility imposters, service termination rules, and what winter heating costs look like as we enter the heating season. Dan will also discuss the increasing cost of electricity, why prices have been going up, and what to expect in the future.

11:45 a.m. - 12:15 p.m. **Sustaining the Helper: Wellness and Mental Health for the Provider**

Markie Troutman, Community Liaison, Haven Behavioral Hospitals

This presentation will provide an overview of the 8 dimensions of wellness. The presenter will also share practical strategies for self-care and seeking services as a provider.

12:15 - 1:15 p.m. **Lunch**

1:15 - 1:45 p.m. **Introduction to Commission on Economic Opportunity (CEO) Programs**

Rachael Altemose, Case Management Outreach, Commission on Economic Opportunity
Colleen Garrison, Planning Coordinatior, Commission on Economic Opportunity

This session provides an overview of the wide range of programs offered by the Commission on Economic Opportunity (CEO), including utility assistance, Weinberg Food Bank initiatives, housing support services, and weatherization programs.

1:45 - 2:15 p.m. **Working Effectively with People with Disabilities: Practical Strategies and Community Resources**

Keith Loughney, Director of Independent Living Services, MyCIL
Keith Williams, Manager of OVR Grant and Advocacy, MyCIL

This presentation will provide an overview of MyCIL and the services available to individuals with disabilities throughout northeastern Pennsylvania. Presenters will also share practical strategies for communicating and working effectively with people with disabilities, promoting accessibility, and connecting individuals with community-based resources that support independence.

2:15 - 2:45 p.m. **Legal Help is Just a Click Away**

Gladys Brown Dutrieuille, Of Counsel, Stevens and Lee

The Pennsylvania Free Legal Answers program is a virtual legal advice clinic run by the Pennsylvania Bar Association. Licensed Pennsylvania attorneys volunteer their time to provide basic legal advice without any expectation of long-term representation. Learn more about how consumers can use the program for public utility questions, and more!

2:45 - 3:15 p.m. **A Day in the Life: Responding to Domestic Violence**

Tammy Rodgers, Training and Education Specialist,
Domestic Violence Service Center

This session will talk about increasing awareness and understanding of domestic violence and how it affects people at home and work. It will also increase opportunities for people to access resources and how you can best respond.

3:15 - 3:30 p.m. **Complete Evaluations, Raffle & Closing**

https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/D53B52G

Please complete your evaluation.
Your feedback is important to us!

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Guest Speaker

MARY BACH



Mary Bach is a long-time, nationally recognized, independent Consumer Advocate. As a volunteer, she is also Chair of the AARP Pennsylvania Consumer Issues Task Force.

A former high school teacher, Mary was elected Murrysville Councilwoman for four years, and then elected Franklin Regional School Board Member for eight years. She has numerous television and radio credits, including appearances on the "Today Show," "Good Morning America," "Donahue," and "Dateline," as well as many segments on local TV programs and talk-radio shows. She has been a featured speaker or workshop presenter at numerous state, national, and international conferences on a wide variety of consumer issues. She appears monthly on ABC27's "GoodDayPA" in Harrisburg, PA, providing the FraudWatch segments, and weekends doing the "FraudWatch Minute." She is also a frequent guest on "Focus on Aging Adults" on PCN-TV.

Mary has been on the forefront of telemarketing issues, from the consumer's perspective. She is Vice President of the Scanning Certification Advisory Board, helping to set industry standards for retail pricing accuracy at the checkout. She has had Governor's appointments to three statewide committees. She is now in her third term as a member of the PA PUC's Consumer Advisory Council, representing the general public. She was honored as 1999 National Consumer of the Year at the National Press Club in Washington, D.C., and also has received the Jefferson Award Bronze Medal. In 2004, she was awarded AARP's prestigious Andres Award, the organization's highest honor for community service. In 2006, the Pennsylvania Association of Weights and Measures named their annual consumer award after her, "The Mary Bach Consumer of the Year Award," for her efforts in promoting marketplace fairness. In 2016, she received the AARP "Ethel Award for Community Outreach." In 2018, she was honored by AARP nationally as one of 12 "Superstar Volunteers" and was the recipient of the AARP 2018 National Trailblazer Award. In 2019, she was honored with the Westinghouse SURE Lifetime Achievement Award. Mary is the mother of two, and the grandmother of four. She resides in Murrysville, PA.

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Committee Members

Christina Chase-Pettis, PAPUC

Shari A. Williams, PAPUC

Regina Carter, PAPUC

Kristen Kelly, PPL Electric Utilities

April Petras, PPL Electric Utilities

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Dorothy Miller, PA American Water

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