

REV.E. TINSLEY
President



TED JEFFERSON
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Bronx Shepherds Restoration Corporation

October 14

Jaclyn A. Brillling, Secretary
New York State
Public Service Commission
3 Empire State Plaza
Albany, New York 12223-1350

Re: Case # 05-M-0090 – In the Matter of the SBC III

Dear Secretary Brillling:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments on the staff proposal regarding SBC III. We acknowledge the important public service that the Public Service Commission provided to New Yorkers by adopting and continuing the SBC program through SBC I and II and strongly support the continuation of public benefit program funding through an SBC III.

Our agency is a non-profit community-based organization organized in 1980 by pastors, ministers and laypersons who chose to remain and rebuild the South Bronx after major institutions abandoned the area. Bronx Shepherds' membership today consists of approximately 40 member churches with an excess of 10,000 members. We provide a range of services promoting the maintenance and development of affordable housing in low-income neighborhoods in the Bronx.

For more than twenty years, Bronx Shepherds Restoration Corporation has provided energy efficiency services to low-income households in both small homes and multifamily buildings through the Federal Weatherization Assistance Program currently administered in NY State by the NYS Division of Housing and Community Renewal (DHCR) under Federal regulations from the US Department of Energy (DOE).

As with other weatherization subgrantees throughout NYS, our capacity to provide these services locally is also supported by a share of the HEAP funds NYS receives from the US Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) that are targeted for weatherization purposes.

Since 1999, we have been able to participate in several NYSERDA-funded programs made possible by the Public Service Commission's System Benefits Charge. Under the coordinated project model developed first under NYSERDA's Direct Install program, we have been successful in providing a more comprehensive scope of services and to do so in more low-income housing units in the Bronx.

This coordination of federal dollars with State funds and building owner investment has resulted in leveraging more resources to address the growing needs of low-income households in a time of rapidly increasing household energy prices.

NYSERDA funds from the Direct Install program first allowed us to expand the scope of measures then eligible under weatherization, adding electric load reduction measures (such as energy efficient refrigerator refrigerators and hardwired lighting) before these were eligible under the Federal regulations. SBC funds enabled us to add these measures to all the apartment buildings and 1-4 units homes that we completed under weatherization throughout the period of that program, from late 1999 through March 31, 2002. Since then, Bronx Shepherds has also been active as a Local Case Manager in NYSERDA's Assisted Multifamily Program (a successor to the Direct Install program) and as a Home Performance Contractor and team member in the Weatherization Network Initiative. We therefore have direct experience with large numbers of low-income tenants, building owners and home owners in the Bronx who have benefited from the Public Service Commission's System Benefits Charge funded programs.

From that experience, I wish to offer the following specific recommendations for your consideration in reviewing the staff proposal regarding SBC III.

1. Increase Funding Share for Low Income Programs

In light of the growing needs that we see in the Bronx, an increased share of SBC funds should be allocated for low-income programs, including those targeting low-income residents in multifamily buildings where heat is included in the rent but tenants pay directly for their electric utility bills (direct metered customers).

2. Expand Definition of Energy Burden to Include "Rent plus Utility" Burden

In developing low-income programs, we recommend that a broader definition of "energy burden" be used to recognize that when heat is included in the rent (as it is in most rental properties in NYC), the rising cost of oil and natural gas puts an upward pressure on rent that results in a much higher "household rent plus utilities" burden. This threatens the availability of affordable housing, particularly for seniors and others living on fixed incomes in the Bronx.

3. Provide a Greater Share of NYSERDA Funding for the Residential Sector, Including an Accurate Count of those living in Multifamily Buildings

Please call upon NYSERDA to address the undercounting of the need and opportunity in multifamily buildings where the common area account is identified as either a small or large commercial service classification but the electric service provides public hallway and other common area lighting and electricity. The Bronx is second only to Manhattan in the percentage of residential housing units are in buildings with 10 or more units. According to the 2000 census, 68.9 % of 490,659 Bronx households lived in such multifamily buildings (compared with 90.1 % in Manhattan but only 10.3 percent in Rockland County and even less in most of the counties in New York state).

4. Continued Coordinated Programming with the Weatherization Program

In low-income programs, NYSERDA should continue to utilize and build the capacity of the existing statewide network of local community based organizations and community action agencies funded by the Federal Department of Energy's Weatherization Assistance Program and the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program, taking full advantage of leveraging and program coordination opportunities. Specific NYSERDA SBC programs such as the Direct Install program, the CBO Initiative and the Empower program have each adopted this approach; and should be expanded under SBC III.

5. Training and Certification

Continue and expand SBC support for the development of a broad based, statewide training and certification infrastructure, including training for building performance contractors, weatherization field staff, building superintendents, property managers, heating system designers and installers and a variety of new job classifications. relevant in the changing energy industry.

6. Advanced Metering and New Information and Controls Technology

Expand on existing NYSERDA initiatives providing targeted support for development of an **advanced metering** infrastructure in the mass residential market, including apartments in multifamily buildings as well as in small homes, in order to provide the information, technology and controls enabling effective implementation of time sensitive rates, and promoting energy efficiency and load management.

7. Continued Support for Energy Efficiency Resource Acquisition Programs

We support continued market transformation approach but recognize the continued need for resource acquisition strategies and incentives to address the market barriers, especially in the split incentive environment of multifamily buildings where building owners often pay only for common area energy use while tenants are directly and individually metered for their electric use. Incentives sufficient to overcome such barriers are still needed. We also recommend a balanced approach that continues greater focus on energy efficiency, while incorporating demand reduction strategies.

Again, thank you for the opportunity to provide in the matter of SBC III.

Sincerely yours,



Barry Seebachan
Weatherization Director
Bronx Shepherds Restoration Corporation