FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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DHR TO BEGIN ACCEPTING APPLICATIONS FOR COOLING ASSISTANCE JUNE 1st

ATLANTA (GA) – With the onset of summer, the Department of Human Resources (DHR) will begin providing cooling assistance for low income Georgians through the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) for the first time since 2000. With Governor Perdue’s allocation of $4.1 million, along with additional Federal funding, the state of Georgia has received a total of $54 million for Energy Assistance. Local community action agencies will administer all available funds beginning in June.

Starting June 1, 2006, the homebound and the elderly (65+) may apply for assistance at their local community action agencies. All other eligible families may apply beginning on June 12, 2006. The LIHEAP cooling program will provide a one time benefit to clients who meet the LIHEAP eligibility criteria. This year three options are being made available for cooling program clients: receiving a one time payment of $220 to their cooling utility vendor; purchasing a window air conditioner up to $350 (including installation); or purchasing a fan with misting function up to $110.

These three choices will allow clients to choose the benefit which best serves their needs. According to the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, electric fans do not prevent heat-related illness when temperatures reach the high 90s. Some clients, however, have expressed a preferred interest in a fan rather than an air conditioner or a vendor payment.

To qualify for the LIHEAP program applicants must have a yearly household income less than or equal to 150% of the federal poverty guidelines, as defined by the US Department of Health and Human Services. For a one-person household, that would be $14,355; for two people $19,245; for three people $24,135; for four people $29,025; for five people $33,915; for six people $38,805; for seven people $43,695; for eight people $48,585; and for each additional person, add $4,890 in household income.

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To apply, applicants must bring a copy of their most recent energy bill or a statement of service from their utility provider to their local community action agency. Applicants must also provide proof of household income—for the last 30 days, such as a pay stub or letter from an employer. Applicants must also have a valid Social Security Number for all household members.

The LIHEAP program is operated on a first come, first served basis within each region served by a local community action agency. Those who have a need are encouraged to apply as soon as possible. Applicants are urged to call 800-869-1150 or visit http://geaaonline.org to locate the nearest community action agency in their area.

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