

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

April 4, 2014

The Honorable Tom Harkin, Chairman
The Honorable Jerry Moran, Ranking Member
Committee on Appropriations
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, Education and Related Agencies
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Harkin and Ranking Member Moran:

We appreciate your past support for the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) and urge you to fund this important program at no less than \$4.7 billion in Fiscal Year 2015.

LIHEAP is the main federal program that helps low-income households and seniors with their energy bills, providing vital assistance during both the cold winter and hot summer months. LIHEAP assistance is an indispensable lifeline, helping to ensure that recipients do not have to choose between paying their energy bills and affording other necessities like food and medicine. Access to affordable home energy is a matter of health and safety for many low-income households, children, and seniors.

We are increasingly concerned about the decline in LIHEAP funding as energy costs remain high and the number of eligible households continues to exceed those receiving assistance. Total program funding has been reduced from \$5.1 billion in FY2010 to \$3.4 billion in FY2014 – a decrease of more than 30 percent. According to the National Energy Assistance Director's Association, not only has the number of households served decreased by more than one million during this period (from 8.1 million in FY2010 to 6.7 million in FY2013), but those receiving assistance have seen their average LIHEAP grant reduced by about \$100, from \$520 to around \$400. This means the average LIHEAP grant now covers just a fraction of average home energy costs, leaving many low-income families and seniors with fewer resources available to meet other basic needs.

This recent winter highlighted the great need for robust LIHEAP funding. Persistently cold temperatures and high energy costs across much of the country resulted in a home heating crisis for many families, and LIHEAP offices faced unprecedented requests for assistance. The U.S. Energy Information Administration's Short-Term Energy Outlook, released earlier this month, reported that average expenditures for U.S. households using propane for heating are expected to be 54 percent higher this winter compared with last winter. Expenditures for households using heating oil will be seven percent higher, natural gas 10 percent higher, and electricity five percent higher. LIHEAP assistance has been crucial for many low-income households and seniors struggling to pay their energy bills this winter, yet there are many more eligible households in need of relief.

We ask that you take into account the great need for LIHEAP and the devastating impact that cuts to the program could have on low-income families and seniors and restore LIHEAP funding to no less than \$4.7 billion.

Thank you for your attention to and consideration of this important request. We look forward to continuing to work with you to support this vital program and help provide access to affordable home energy for the most vulnerable households in our states.

Sincerely,

Jack Reed

Susan Collins

Sheldon Brown

Kelly A. Ayotte

Edward J. Markey

Angus King

Ben Cardin

John H. Coons

Max Baucus

Chris Coons

Kay R. Hagan

Barack Obama

Jim Tote

Din Duhin

Fabrizio Ledy

Jan Neubauer

Kirsten Gillibrand

Tommy Boddie

Bob Carey, Jr.

Brian Schatz

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Richard Blumenthal

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Heidi Heitkamp

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