

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

April 13, 2019

The Honorable Roy Blunt
Chairman
Committee on Appropriations
Subcommittee on Labor, HHS, Education
and Related Agencies
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Patty Murray
Ranking Member
Committee on Appropriations
Subcommittee on Labor, HHS, Education
and Related Agencies
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Blunt and Ranking Member Murray:

We write in support of the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) and to express our deep concern with the President's proposal to eliminate funding for this safety-net program in fiscal year (FY) 2020. We appreciate the Committee providing increased funding for LIHEAP in FY 2019 and request that you continue to prioritize funding for this vital program in FY 2020 to help ensure that it meets the needs of eligible low-income households and seniors.


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.

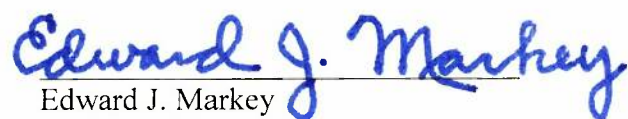
While we recognize ongoing discretionary budget challenges, we are very concerned that the number of households eligible for LIHEAP assistance continues to exceed available funding. This is at a time when the average cost of home heating and cooling remains unaffordable for many households nationwide. According to the National Energy Assistance Directors' Association, the current funding level is able to serve just one out of five eligible households, and those who receive LIHEAP assistance have seen their average grant reduced by about \$76 since 2010, from \$568 in FY 2010 to \$492 in FY 2018. As a result, the purchasing power of the average grant for heating oil declined from about 66 percent in FY 2010 to 55 percent in FY 2018. This means that the average LIHEAP grant now covers a lower portion of average home energy costs, leaving many low-income families and seniors struggling to pay for the basic necessity of home energy and having fewer resources available to meet other essential needs.


As you begin the difficult work of crafting the FY 2020 funding bill, we thank you again for your past support of the program and ask that you continue to take into account the great need for LIHEAP and the impact that cuts to the program could have on our most vulnerable citizens. Prioritizing LIHEAP in FY 2020 would ensure that eligible, low-income households and seniors receive much needed heating and cooling assistance.


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


Sincerely,



Jack Reed
U.S. Senator



Edward J. Markey
U.S. Senator



Tammy Duckworth
U.S. Senator



Kirsten Gillibrand
U.S. Senator



Christopher S. Murphy
U.S. Senator



Joe Manchin III
U.S. Senator

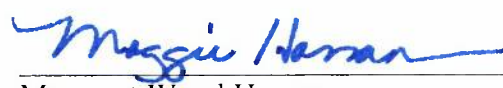

Amy Klobuchar
U.S. Senator



Dianne Feinstein
U.S. Senator



Susan M. Collins
U.S. Senator



Lisa Murkowski
U.S. Senator



Sheldon Whitehouse
U.S. Senator


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Jeanne Shaheen
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Bob Casey, Jr.

Robert P. Casey Jr.
U.S. Senator

Robert Menendez

Robert Menendez
U.S. Senator

Jeffrey A. Merkley

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Christopher A. Coons
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Angus S. King Jr.

Angus S. King Jr.
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Tina Smith

Tina Smith
U.S. Senator

Maria Cantwell

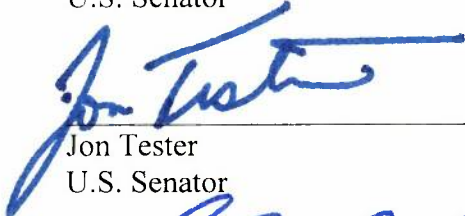
Maria Cantwell
U.S. Senator



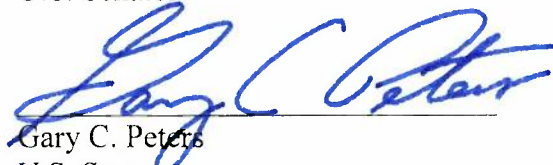
Thomas R. Carper
U.S. Senator



Benjamin L. Cardin
U.S. Senator




Jon Tester
U.S. Senator



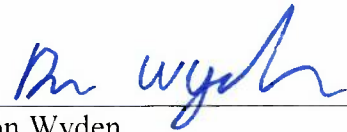
Gary C. Peters
U.S. Senator



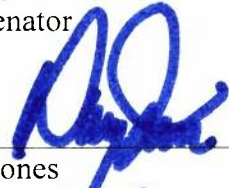
Brian Schatz
U.S. Senator



Chris Van Hollen
U.S. Senator



Ron Wyden
U.S. Senator



Doug Jones
U.S. Senator



Sherrod Brown
U.S. Senator



Michael F. Bennet
U.S. Senator