

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

December 20, 2013

President Barack Obama
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President,

We are writing to request that you prioritize the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) in your Fiscal Year (FY) 2015 budget proposal by including no less than \$4.7 billion for this program that provides critical support to our most vulnerable citizens.

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 households are among the most vulnerable in the country. According to the National Energy Assistance Director's Association (NEADA), more than 90 percent of LIHEAP recipients have at least one household member who is a child, elderly, or disabled, and 20 percent of households contain at least one veteran. For these households, LIHEAP funding has been a lifeline during challenging economic times. Access to affordable home energy is not a luxury -- it is a matter of health and safety.

We understand the ongoing discretionary budget challenges. However, we are deeply concerned that funding for LIHEAP has declined more than 30 percent in recent years. Moreover, the number of households eligible for assistance continues to exceed available funding. Sequestration has further exacerbated these funding challenges. According to NEADA, the total number of households receiving LIHEAP assistance has declined by 17 percent between FY 2010 and FY 2013, from about 8.1 million to 6.7 million. Nearly 1.5 million vulnerable households have lost access to critical LIHEAP assistance and struggle to pay for the basic necessity of home energy in addition to other essentials like food and medicine.


Funding has declined, yet energy costs have remained high, reducing the purchasing power of LIHEAP assistance. Recipients have seen their average LIHEAP grant reduced by more than \$100 since 2010, from \$520 in FY 2010 to \$406 in FY 2013. Meanwhile, the Energy Information Administration (EIA) projects that average winter home heating costs will rise six percent to \$977 per household this winter. The average LIHEAP grant is estimated to cover less than half of the average home heating costs for a household this winter, meaning that many low-income families and seniors will have fewer resources available to meet other basic needs.

As you finalize your FY 2015 budget request, we ask that you take into account the great need for LIHEAP. We urge you to reprioritize this program within your FY 2015 budget and restore funding to this program to a level no less than \$4.7 billion.

Thank you for your attention to and consideration of this important request.

Sincerely,

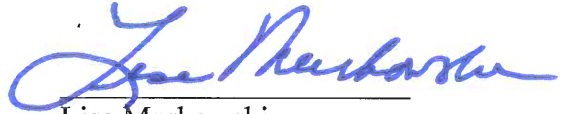

Jack Reed
United States Senator


Susan Collins
United States Senator

cc: Sylvia Mathews Burwell, Director, Office of Management and Budget



Sherrod Brown
United States Senator



Lisa Murkowski
United States Senator



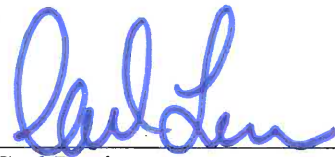
Edward J. Markey
United States Senator



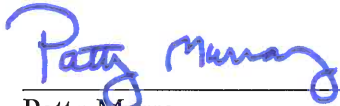
Kelly Ayotte
United States Senator



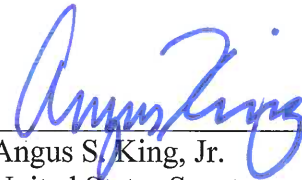
Bernard Sanders
United States Senator



Carl Levin
United States Senator



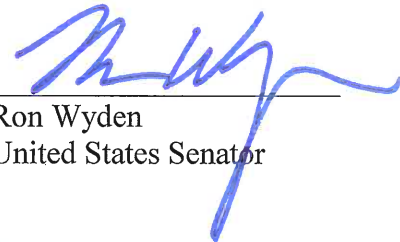
Patty Murray
United States Senator



Angus S. King, Jr.
United States Senator



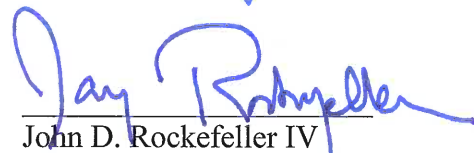
Robert P. Casey, Jr.
United States Senator



Ron Wyden
United States Senator



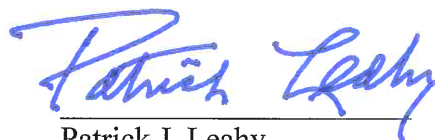
Sheldon Whitehouse
United States Senator



John D. Rockefeller IV
United States Senator



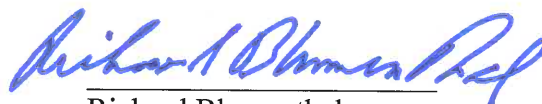
Christopher A. Coons
United States Senator



Patrick J. Leahy
United States Senator



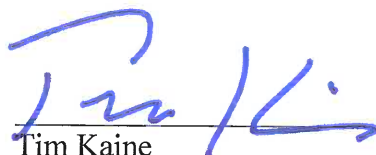
Debbie Stabenow
United States Senator



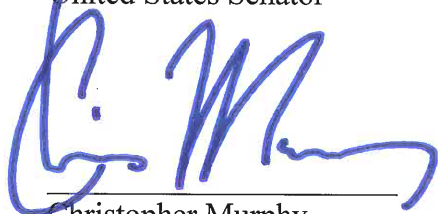
Richard Blumenthal
United States Senator



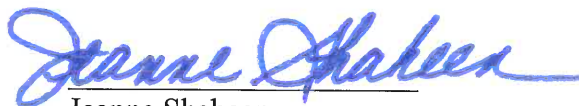
Kirsten E. Gillibrand
United States Senator



Tim Kaine
United States Senator



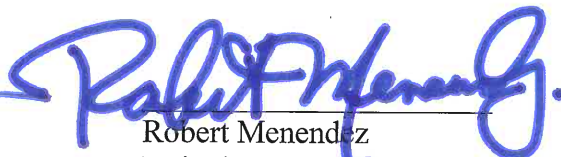
Christopher Murphy
United States Senator



Jeanne Shaheen
United States Senator



Al Franken
United States Senator



Robert Menendez
United States Senator



Jeff Merkley
United States Senator



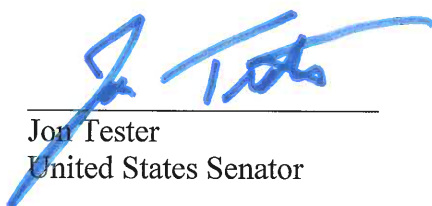
Mazie K. Hirono
United States Senator




Amy Klobuchar
United States Senator



Mark L. Pryor
United States Senator



Jon Tester
United States Senator



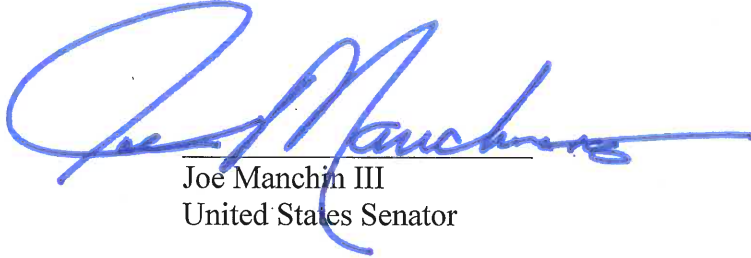
Tammy Baldwin
United States Senator



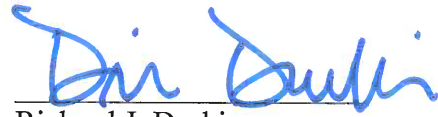
Charles E. Schumer
United States Senator



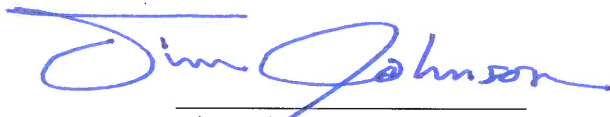
Mary L. Landrieu
United States Senator



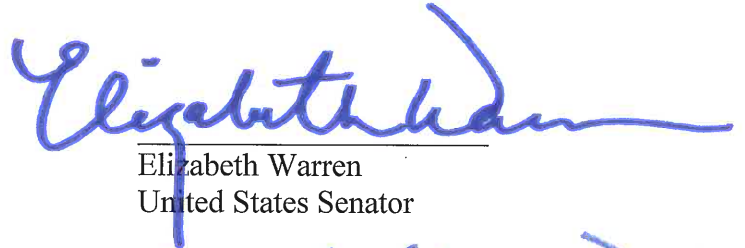
Joe Manchin III
United States Senator



Richard J. Durbin
United States Senator



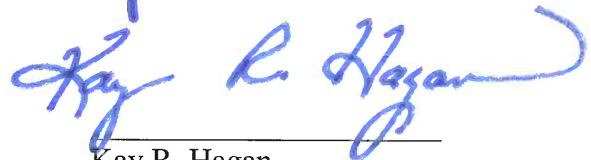
Tim Johnson
United States Senator



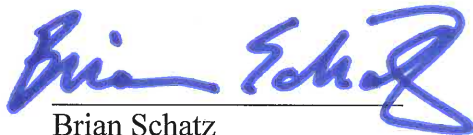
Elizabeth Warren
United States Senator



Benjamin L. Cardin
United States Senator



Kay R. Hagan
United States Senator



Brian Schatz
United States Senator