

# NEADA

National Energy Assistance Directors' Association

March 13, 2019

The Honorable Alex Azar II  
Secretary  
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services  
200 Independence Avenue S.W.  
Washington, DC 20201

Dear Secretary Azar,

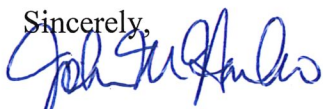
On behalf of the National Energy Assistance Directors' Association (NEADA), I am writing to express my concern regarding the decision to move the remaining \$37 million in funding for the Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) to help pay for the Unaccompanied Alien Children's (UAC) Program. The remaining LIHEAP funds are needed by the states to help families cover higher energy bills associated with the winters severe weather and polar vortex, as well as cooling costs this summer.

While the UAC program may be in need of additional funding, taking money from one underfunded critical social service program to pay for another program does nothing to improve the overall well-being of our country's most vulnerable families. LIHEAP provides energy assistance to some of the poorest families in the country helping them avoid having to choose between paying their home energy bill and food, medicine and other essentials. Diverting funds intended for this program to another cause will put vulnerable families at risk of losing heating and cooling in their homes.

The 2018 National Energy Assistance Survey<sup>1</sup>, completed by NEADA found that one third of low-income American households who received LIHEAP help last year to pay utility bills received shut-off notices that caused many families to go without food or medicines to pay them, and 15 percent had their heat and light shut off before receiving LIHEAP assistance. The poor are hit hard by energy bills, which take about 12 percent out of a low-income paycheck, but only 2.7 percent from households with higher wages. In winter, the heating bill can cost a poor family 25 percent of its income.

We urge you to not take this action of shifting LIHEAP from their intended purpose and find another way to pay for the shortfall in the UAC program.

Sincerely,



JOHN HARVANKO  
Chair

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<sup>1</sup> The NEADA survey, <http://neada.org/program-policy-reports/liheapsurvey/> underlines the agonizing choices faced by low-income households that struggle to pay their utility bills.