

NEADA

National Energy Assistance Directors' Association

September 12, 2017

The Honorable Tom Price
Secretary
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
200 Independence Avenue, S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20201

Dear Secretary Price:

On behalf of the National Energy Assistance Directors Association (NEADA), representing the state directors of the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP), I am writing to urge you to release program funds for FY 2018 at 90 percent of the FY 2017 program level, the same percentage that was released last year to the states prior to the enactment of a full-year appropriation.

LIHEAP provides heating and cooling assistance to about 6.0 million very low-income households across the country, and is one of the first programs to start providing services at the beginning of the fiscal year. Releasing 90 percent of the funds at the start of the year allows LIHEAP offices, especially those in the cold weather states, to quickly sign up vulnerable low income households prior to the start of the winter heating season. This approach is appropriate since both the House and Senate Appropriations Committees have approved level funding of \$3.39 billion for LIHEAP for FY 2018.

As the winter heating season approaches, we are concerned that any delay in releasing program funds will cause unnecessary hardships to the households that we serve. As a result, NEADA is requesting that program funds be released no later than October 15, 2017. This will allow states to provide funds to local administering agencies to start winter heating programs and be ready to help some of the nation's most vulnerable households maintain access to electric and gas service. It will also be used to help poor families whose homes have been damaged by hurricanes Harvey and Irma repair the heating and cooling systems as well as help them pay their energy bills.

LIHEAP's impact in many cases goes beyond providing bill payment assistance by playing a crucial role in maintaining family stability. It enables elderly citizens to live independently and ensures that young children have safe, warm homes to live in. Although the circumstances that lead each client to seek LIHEAP assistance are different, LIHEAP links these stories by enabling people to cope with difficult circumstances with dignity.

I appreciate your consideration of NEADA's request to release program funds. Our states are ready to deploy these funds to help some of the nation's poorest families pay their home energy bills.

Sincerely,



John Harvanko
Chair, NEADA