

# NEADA

National Energy Assistance Directors' Association

The Honorable Thad Cochran  
Chairman  
Committee on Appropriations  
U.S. Senate  
S-128, The Capitol  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Barbara Mikulski  
Vice Chairwoman  
Committee on Appropriations  
U.S. Senate  
503 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Roy Blunt  
Chairman  
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human  
Services, Education, and Related Agencies  
Committee on Appropriations  
U.S. Senate  
260 Russell Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Patty Murray  
Ranking Member  
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human  
Services, Education, and Related Agencies  
Committee on Appropriations  
U.S. Senate  
154 Russell Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

September 22, 2015

**Dear Chairman Cochran, Vice Chairwoman Mikulski, Chairman Blunt and Ranking Member Murray :**

The Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) provided assistance to more than six million poor households to help them pay their heating and cooling bill. Many of these families have no choice other than to choose between paying their home energy bill and other vital necessities including food, clothing and medicine.

The National Energy Assistance Directors' Association represents the state LIHEAP directors. We see first hand how LIHEAP makes a difference for families in affording home energy each and every day. Program funding has been cut from a high of \$5.1 billion in FY 2010 to the current level of about \$3.3 billion. Funding at best is only sufficient to reach about 20 percent of eligible households leaving many to struggle to pay their home energy bills.

As state officials, our members recognize the tight budget constraints that you are operating under. However the need for LIHEAP is considerable and we urge you to consider restoring LIHEAP to the 2011 funding level of \$4.7 billion for FY 2016 to help the continuing high level of families struggling to pay their home energy bills as a result of low wage jobs, underemployment and for those on fixed incomes who have no other source of income other than Social Security.

In addition, to address the possibility of delays in finalizing the FY 2016 appropriations, we also urge you include similar language to that included in the FY 2015 bill that would allow states to

draw down funds in advance of the final appropriation while the final bill is being developed. This will allow cold weather states to quickly get their programs up and running to address the need to purchase delivered fuels or restore service to help those families who became disconnected from their natural gas and electric services.

We also recommend that you continue to allow the Administration to set-aside \$2.9 million from the block grant appropriation to provide funding for training and technical assistance by nonprofit organizations as allowed under the current authorization law.

The additional funding we are requesting will provide states with a minimum level of flexibility to address potential price spikes that could occur because of increasing instability in global energy markets as well as increasingly unstable weather conditions. The importance of additional funding was underscored in 2014 when propane prices skyrocketed unexpectedly due to a supply shortage.

Thank you for your consideration of our request. Please contact us for more information on the importance of LIHEAP in helping needy families reduce energy costs, prevent shutoffs and stay in their homes during energy price spikes, as well as the important steps state LIHEAP offices are taking to ensure program integrity and accountability.

Sincerely,

*Susan Brown*

Susan Brown  
Chair