

NEADA

NATIONAL ENERGY ASSISTANCE DIRECTORS ASSOCIATION

The Honorable Charles Schumer
Majority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Minority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy
Speaker
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Hakeem Jeffries
Minority Leader
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

September 20, 2023

Dear Majority Leader Schumer, Minority Leader McConnell, Speaker McCarthy and Minority Leader Jeffries:

On behalf of the National Energy Assistance Directors Association (NEADA), we are writing to request that the Congress provide \$6 billion in the FY 2024 appropriation for the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP), maintaining the 2023 total appropriation, to address continuing high prices for all home heating and cooling fuels.

States have reported that applications in many cases are up by between 10 and 20 percent from last year's levels and that if funding is reduced to the \$4 billion level included in the House and Senate Labor HHS spending bills, they will be forced to reduce the number of households served by up to one million households and reduce average benefit levels.

Energy remains unaffordable for low income families. For example, NEADA is projecting that the price of home heating this winter will remain at last year's high level of about \$1,100. And for those using heating oil, prices could increase from \$2,094 last year to \$2,275.

For many struggling families, higher prices can mean being forced to choose between heat, food, or medication. About 29% of Americans who were surveyed had to reduce or forego expenses for basic household necessities to pay an energy bill in the last year, according to the U.S. Census Bureau's [Pulse Survey](#).

Of even greater concern with rising prices is the amount owed by families to their local utilities. About 20 million families now owe on average about \$16 billion to their local utilities or about \$800 per family, up from about \$8 billion or \$400 per family prior to the start of the pandemic.

Last year, the Biden Administration [issued a statement](#) discussing how LIHEAP can be used to help families cope with rising temperatures. We completely agree – LIHEAP can be used to effectively to purchase cooling equipment and help families pay their cooling bills – if the program is funded adequately. Our current funding is not sufficient to fulfill that request.

However, we believe that cooling is an important need for struggling families and if we had the resources, we could move quickly to expand the current LIHEAP cooling benefits.

In summary, to address the concerns raised in this letter, we are requesting \$6 billion for LIHEAP for FY 2024 to maintain program support for families receiving LIHEAP assistance.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Barb Klug".

Barb Klug
Chair, NEADA