Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20510

January 20, 2010

The Honorable Barack Obama
President of the United States
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear Mr. President:

We would like to thank you for so responding so quickly to our request to release the emergency Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) funding, however, we would like to express our concerns regarding the formula behind how the $490 million will be released.

While we are glad that this emergency funding will help Vermonters and people throughout this country stay warm this winter, we are disappointed that more of this funding was not targeted to cold weather states that depend heavily on home heating oil in the winter. Unfortunately, it seems like a disproportionate amount of this emergency assistance went to warm weather states that are not experiencing an emergency right now.

We are aware that there is an additional $100 million still available in emergency LIHEAP funding. We urge you to immediately release the remaining emergency LIHEAP funding to states that are experiencing exceptionally cold weather and increased home heating fuel prices, consistent with how last year's emergency LIHEAP funding was distributed. Last year, of the $590 million in emergency funding, $100 million was targeted to states that had the highest usage of home heating oil in the country.

According to the latest data from the Energy Information Administration, average residential heating oil prices in Vermont are now $2.87 a gallon, up 24 cents from last year. Rising home heating oil prices are causing a severe hardship for senior citizens on fixed incomes, families with children and persons with disabilities in Vermont and other cold weather states. Releasing the remaining LIHEAP funding to help cover increased heating oil prices will ensure that those who need this assistance the most will receive it.

We thank you in advance for your attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,

Patrick Leahy
PATRICK LEAHY
United States Senator

Bernard Sanders
BERNARD SANDERS
United States Senator

Peter Welch
PETER WELCH
United States Representative