United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

March 27, 2015

The Honorable Roy Blunt, Chairman
The Honorable Patty Murray, Ranking Member
Committee on Appropriations
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, Education and Related Agencies
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Blunt and Ranking Member Murray:

We write in support of the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) and urge you to fund this important program at no less than $4.7 billion in Fiscal Year 2016.

LIHEAP is the main federal program that helps low-income households and seniors with their energy bills, providing vital assistance during both the cold winter and hot summer months. LIHEAP assistance is an indispensable lifeline, helping to ensure that recipients do not have to choose between paying their energy bills and affording other necessities like food and medicine. Access to affordable home energy is a matter of health and safety for many low-income households, children, and seniors.

While we recognize the ongoing discretionary budget challenges, we are increasingly concerned that the number of households eligible for LIHEAP assistance continues to exceed available funding at a time when the average cost of home heating is expected to remain unaffordable for millions of households nationwide. In fact, according to the National Energy Assistance Director's Association, the current funding level is able to serve just 20 percent of the eligible population, and those who receive LIHEAP assistance have seen their average grant reduced by nearly $100 since 2010, from $520 in FY 2010 to $424 in FY 2014. This means that the average LIHEAP grant now covers just a fraction of average home energy costs, leaving many low-income families and seniors struggling to pay for the basic necessity of home energy and having fewer resources available to meet other essential needs.

We ask that you take into account the great need for LIHEAP and the impact that cuts to the program could have on low-income families and seniors and restore LIHEAP funding to no less than $4.7 billion.

Thank you for your attention to and consideration of this important request. We look forward to continuing to work with you to support this vital program and help provide access to affordable home energy for the most vulnerable households in our states.

Sincerely,

Jack Reed
United States Senator

Susan Collins
United States Senator

Sherrod Brown
United States Senator

Kelly Ayotte
United States Senator

Edward Markey
United States Senator

Roger Wicker
United States Senator

Sheldon Whitehouse
United States Senator

Jeanne Shaheen
United States Senator

Robert P. Casey, Jr.
United States Senator

Angus King
United States Senator

Ron Wyden
United States Senator

Bernard Sanders
United States Senator

Patrick J. Leahy
United States Senator

Richard Blumenthal
United States Senator

Jon Tester
United States Senator

Amy Klobuchar
United States Senator

Jeff Merkley
United States Senator

Tim Kaine
United States Senator

Debbie Stabenow
United States Senator

Brian Schatz
United States Senator

Gary Peters
United States Senator

Elizabeth Warren
United States Senator

Tammy Baldwin
United States Senator

Al Franken
United States Senator

Charles E. Schumer
United States Senator

Benjamin L. Cardin
United States Senator

Robert Menendez
United States Senator

Joe Manchin III
United States Senator

Mazie K. Hirono
United States Senator

Christopher A. Coons
United States Senator

Cory A. Booker
United States Senator

Maria Cantwell
United States Senator

Barbara Boxer
United States Senator

Richard Durbin
United States Senator

Kirsten Gillibrand
United States Senator

Michael F. Bennet
United States Senator

Joe Donnelly
United States Senator

Christopher S. Murphy
United States Senator