

National Energy Assistance Directors' Association
1232 31st NW
Washington, DC 20007

May 16, 2013

The Honorable Kathleen Sebelius
Secretary, US Department of Health and Human Services
200 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20201

Dear Secretary Sebelius:

On behalf of the National Energy Assistance Directors' Association (NEADA), representing the state directors of the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) we are writing to request the immediate release of post-sequester funds remaining for LIHEAP. These funds are urgently needed to help families who are facing shut-off conditions due to higher than expected energy costs this winter as well as continued high prices for home heating oil.

The situation is even more severe this year because of the reduction in program funding from \$5.1 billion in FY 2010 to \$3.3 billion this year. As a result, the share of home heating costs paid by LIHEAP has declined during this period from close to 52 percent to about 41 percent, placing a significant financial burden on some of the nation's poorest families.

As a result of the continued delay in the release of post-sequester LIHEAP funds, local agencies have had to lay off program staff, programs have not been able to help families facing shut-off conditions, and in the case of delivered fuels, have not been able to help families struggling to pay for their final delivery due to continued high prices.

The lack of certainty in the allocation of the final program allotment is also causing delays in setting terms for summer cooling programs. LIHEAP families are among the nation's poorest and most vulnerable households. 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 enables people to cope with difficult circumstances with dignity.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,

Larry Dawson
Board Chair, NEADA