

National Energy Assistance Directors' Association
1350 Connecticut Avenue N.W. #1100
Washington, DC 20036

December 11, 2015

President Barack Obama
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President,

On behalf of the state directors of the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP), I am writing to urge you to fully fund LIHEAP at or above \$4.7 billion for FY 2017. This funding level is required because the average cost of home heating remains unaffordable for millions of low-income households across the country at an average annual price of about \$800 in FY 2015.

While the price of winter heating has fallen from last year's high of \$880, the cost remains out of reach for the millions of households receiving LIHEAP assistance, especially those using delivered fuels, with an average cost of \$1,436 for propane, \$1,392 for heating oil, \$930 for electricity and \$578 for natural gas. The cost of home energy places an enormous burden on low-income families: compared to other households, a typical low-income family spends almost four times as much of its income on home energy.

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 in which to live. Although the circumstances that lead clients to seek LIHEAP assistance differ, LIHEAP enables people to cope with difficult circumstances with dignity.

Current federal funding is only sufficient to serve about 6.8 million households nationally, or about 20 percent of all eligible households. The additional funds would allow states to increase the percent of households served to about 25 percent of eligible households and provide a modest increase in program heating and cooling benefits. It will also provide states with the flexibility to address potential price spikes that could occur due to increasing instability in global energy markets or increasingly unstable weather conditions. The importance of additional funding was underscored last winter when propane prices skyrocketed unexpectedly due to a supply shortage, forcing many of the nation's poorest families to choose between paying their home energy bill and other vital necessities.

In addition, the lack of a final program appropriation prior to the beginning of the fiscal year creates significant administrative problems for states in setting their program eligibility guidelines. I am concerned that states will be hampered in their ability to administer their programs efficiently due to the lack of advanced funding. In order to address this concern, I am requesting advance appropriations of at least \$4.7 billion for FY 2018. I also recommend that you continue 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.

I appreciate your consideration of NEADA's request for the FY 2017 program funding level and FY 2018 advanced appropriation.

Sincerely,

Susan Brown

Susan Brown
Chair, NEADA