

NEADA

National Energy Assistance Directors' Association

October 9, 2018

The Honorable Alex M. Azar II
Secretary
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
200 Independence Avenue, S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20201

Dear Secretary Azar:

On behalf of the National Energy Assistance Directors Association (NEADA), representing the state directors of the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP), I am writing to urge you to release program funds for FY 2019 as soon as possible.

The average cost of home heating has remained unaffordable for millions of low-income households with an average annual price of \$861 last winter. According to the US Energy Information Administration, the average home heating cost last winter for those using propane was \$1,676, heating oil \$1,506, electricity \$965 and natural gas \$634. LIHEAP assistance is only sufficient to reach about one of five eligible households and 70 percent of recipient households have at least one vulnerable and at-risk member who is elderly, disabled or have a child under the age of six.

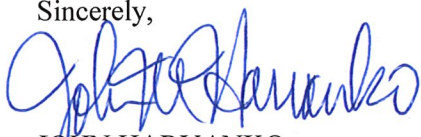
Releasing funds as soon as possible will allow states to provide funds to local administering agencies to hire staff to start and plan winter heating programs and be ready to help some of the nation's most vulnerable households to maintain access to electric, gas, heating oil and propane.

Of immediate concern to states will be to help those families using heating oil and propane. The price of these petroleum-based products could increase by up to 40 percent this winter because of rising global prices. The timely release of LIHEAP funds will allow us to quickly move to help these families begin preparing for what could be a very expensive winter heating season by allowing them to purchase their first tank of heating oil or propane.

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 links these stories by enabling people to cope with difficult circumstances with dignity.

I appreciate your consideration of NEADA's request to release appropriated program funds. Our states are ready to deploy these funds to help some of the nation's poorest families pay their home energy bills.

Sincerely,



JOHN HARVANKO
Chair, NEADA