



The Honorable Xavier Becerra  
Secretary  
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services  
200 Independence Avenue, S.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20201

October 5, 2021

Dear Secretary Becerra :

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 2022 at 90 percent of the FY 2021 program level, the same percentage that was released in FY 2020 to the states prior to the enactment of a full-year appropriation.

LIHEAP is a seasonal program. Providing 90 percent of the funds at the beginning of the fiscal year is vital to the program's effectiveness. Therefore, NEADA is requesting that program funds be released no later than October 15, 2021. This 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 and gas service.

All signs point to higher costs this winter and releasing LIHEAP funds by October 15 will help states plan for the upcoming winter heating season. The spot-price for natural gas and oil are at the highest level in more than four years. Since last year at this time, natural gas prices are up by 172 percent and oil is up by 91 percent.

The funds will also be used to immediately help families unemployed as a result of the pandemic pay their energy bills. In addition, utility shut-off moratoriums are beginning to expire. Currently only three states and DC have shut-off moratoriums in place.

The average cost of home heating has remained unaffordable for millions of low-income households. According to the US Energy Information Administration, the average home heating cost last winter for those using heating oil was \$1,221, electricity \$1,209 and natural gas \$572. LIHEAP assistance is only sufficient to reach about one of six 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.

I appreciate your consideration of NEADA's request to release 90 percent of program funds no later than October 15, 2021. Our states are ready to deploy these funds to help some of the nation's poorest families pay their home energy bills.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Barb Klug". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Barb Klug  
Chair, NEADA