

NEADA

NATIONAL ENERGY ASSISTANCE DIRECTORS ASSOCIATION

April 15, 2025

The Honorable Robert F. Kennedy, Jr
Secretary
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
200 Independence Avenue, S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20201

Dear Secretary Kennedy:

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 as soon as possible remaining funds available from the FY 2025 Full Year Continuing Resolution and Extensions Act.

Specifically, we are requesting that the final ten percent (\$378 million) of the full appropriation be released no later than May 1, 2025, giving states only 153 days to deploy these critical funds before the end of the federal fiscal year on September 30, 2025. NEADA is concerned that any further delay in the release of appropriated funds will make it difficult for states to cover the needs of poor families facing shut-off of vital utility services as a result of the expiration of winter shut-off moratoriums, or to meet staffing and planning requirements to start up summer cooling programs.

The release of the remaining appropriated funds that have already been approved by your agency would provide well overdue support for state programs. These funds would be used immediately to help some of the nation's most vulnerable households maintain access to electric and gas service, to cover outstanding bills relating to unexpected delivered fuels emergencies and to allow states to begin planning their summer cooling programs.

In addition, we urge you to rehire the federal LIHEAP employees who were fired two weeks ago. These employees are essential to the program's operations. They run the allocation formula, conduct audits and track the funds to make sure they are following federal law. They also conduct essential research to help make sure that program funds are delivered as quickly and efficiently as possible to help those in need.

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.

The average low-income household spends about 8.1 percent of family income on energy bills — almost three times the rate for non-low-income households. In fact, one out of six American families are currently behind on their home energy bills and the total amount these families owe their utilities is approximately \$21 billion. That's the highest level since 2021, and it has grown

by about 30 percent since the end of 2023. In addition, 37.4 percent of families earning less than \$50,000 a year reported in a recent Census survey that they were unable to pay an energy bill at least once in the past 12 months.

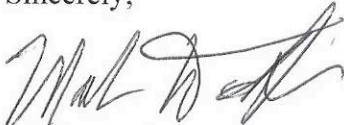
At a time when so many families are struggling to make ends meet — and tariffs are poised to drive prices even higher — it's unconscionable to rip away the help that Congress has already offered to people in need.

LIHEAP doesn't just help families pay their home energy bills. It saves lives in states where summer heat and winter cold can be deadly. In Michigan in 2023, LIHEAP kept the heat on for over 430,000 households. In Arizona, LIHEAP helped more than 20,000 households keep their air conditioning running in 2023, when temperatures rose above 100 degrees on 73 days of the year.

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 vary, LIHEAP enables people to cope with difficult circumstances with dignity.

I appreciate your consideration of NEADA's request to release 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,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Mark Wolfe', written in a cursive style.

Mark Wolfe
Executive Director