March 25, 2015

The Honorable Tom Cole
Chairman
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies
2358-A Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Rosa DeLauro
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies
2358-A Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Tom Cole and Ranking Member Rosa DeLauro,

We are writing to request that you prioritize the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) in your Fiscal Year (FY) 2016 appropriations bill by including no less than $4.7 billion for this program that provides critical support to our most vulnerable citizens.

LIHEAP helps low-income households and seniors with their energy bills, providing vital assistance during both the cold winter and hot summer months. LIHEAP households are among the most vulnerable in the country. According to the National Energy Assistance Director's Association (NEADA), more than 90 percent of LIHEAP recipients have at least one household member who is a child, elderly, or disabled, and 20 percent of households contain at least one veteran. For these households, LIHEAP funding has been a lifeline during challenging economic times. Access to affordable home energy is not a luxury—it is a matter of health and safety.

We understand the ongoing discretionary budget challenges. However, we are deeply concerned that funding for LIHEAP has declined more than 30 percent in recent years. Moreover, the number of households eligible for assistance continues to exceed available funding. According to NEADA, the total number of households receiving LIHEAP assistance has declined by 17.7 percent between FY 2010 and FY 2014, from 8.1 million to 6.6 million. About 1.5 million poor households have lost access to critical LIHEAP assistance and struggle to pay for the basic necessity of home energy in addition to other essentials like food and medicine.

Funding has declined by almost $1.7 billion since FY 2010, yet energy costs have remained high, reducing the purchasing power of LIHEAP assistance. Recipients have seen their average LIHEAP grant reduced by about $95 since 2010, from $520 in FY 2010 to $424 in FY 2014. The average LIHEAP grant is estimated to cover less than half of the average home heating costs for a household this winter, meaning that many low-income families and seniors will have fewer resources available to meet other basic needs.
As you finalize your FY 2016 Labor, Health and Human Services, Education and Related Agencies Appropriations bill, we ask that you take into account the great need for LIHEAP. We urge you to reprioritize this program and restore funding to this program to a level no less than $4.7 billion.

Thank you for your attention to and consideration of this important request.

Sincerely,

Peter Welch
Member of Congress

James P. McGovern
Member of Congress

Charles B. Rangel
Member of Congress

Louise M. Slaughter
Member of Congress

Niki Tsongas
Member of Congress

David N. Cicilline
Member of Congress

Betty McCollum
Member of Congress

Peter King
Member of Congress

Lou Barletta
Member of Congress

Gene Green
Member of Congress

Stephen F. Lynch
Member of Congress

Mark Takai
Member of Congress

Dan Benishek
Member of Congress

Gregorio Kilili Camacho Sablan
Member of Congress
Gerald E. Connolly
Member of Congress

Katherine Clark
Member of Congress

Tim Walz
Member of Congress

Jerry Nadler
Member of Congress

G.K. Butterfield
Member of Congress

Ben Ray Lujan
Member of Congress

Ed Perlmutter
Member of Congress

Gwen Moore
Member of Congress

Ann McLane Kuster
Member of Congress

Yvette D' Clarke
Member of Congress

John Lewis
Member of Congress

Jackie Speier
Member of Congress

Suzanne Bonamici
Member of Congress

Chris Van Hollen
Member of Congress

Raul Ruiz
Member of Congress

Paul Tonko
Member of Congress
Cheri Bustos
Member of Congress

John Katko
Member of Congress

Mike Doyle
Member of Congress

Raúl M. Grijalva
Member of Congress

Chris Collins
Member of Congress

Al Green
Member of Congress

Elijah E. Cummings
Member of Congress

Felix Vela
Member of Congress

Bruce Poliquin
Member of Congress

Beto O'Rourke
Member of Congress

Daniel T. Kildee
Member of Congress

Robert C. Scott
Member of Congress

Julia Brownley
Member of Congress

Emanuel Cleaver
Member of Congress

John P. Sarbanes
Member of Congress

Ron Kind
Member of Congress
Denny Heck
Member of Congress

Debbie Dingell
Member of Congress

Alan Lowenthal
Member of Congress

Alcee L. Hastings
Member of Congress

Andre Carson
Member of Congress

Bennie G. Thompson
Member of Congress

Bill Pascrell Jr.
Member of Congress

Tim Walz
Member of Congress

Collin Peterson
Member of Congress

Adam Schiff
Member of Congress

Albio Sires
Member of Congress

Alma Adams
Member of Congress

Ann Kirkpatrick
Member of Congress

Bill Foster
Member of Congress

Bobby Rush
Member of Congress

Brenda L. Lawrence
Member of Congress

LIHEAP
William R. Keating
Member of Congress

Donald Payne Jr.
Member of Congress

Earl Blumenauer
Member of Congress

Eliot Engel
Member of Congress

Frank A. LoBiondo
Member of Congress

Glenn "GT" Thompson
Member of Congress

Henry C. "Hank" Johnson
Member of Congress

Janice D. Schakowsky
Member of Congress

Diana DeGette
Member of Congress

Donna F. Edwards
Member of Congress

Eleanor Holmes Norton
Member of Congress

Elizabeth Esty
Member of Congress

Frederica S. Wilson
Member of Congress

Grace Meng
Member of Congress

James Himes
Member of Congress

Jared Polis
Member of Congress
Michelle Lujan Grisham
Member of Congress

Donald S. Beyer Jr.
Member of Congress

Matt Cartwright
Member of Congress