

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

March 16, 2016

The Honorable Roy Blunt, Chairman
The Honorable Patty Murray, Ranking Member
Committee on Appropriations
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, Education and Related Agencies
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Blunt and Ranking Member Murray:

We write in support of the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) and urge you to include increased funding for this important program in fiscal year (FY) 2017 to help ensure that it is better positioned to meet the needs of eligible low-income households and seniors. We oppose the proposed cut in funding for this vital safety-net program that was put forth in the President's budget request.

LIHEAP is the main federal program that helps low-income households and seniors with their energy bills, providing vital assistance during both the cold winters and hot summer months. LIHEAP assistance is an indispensable lifeline, helping to ensure that recipients do not have to choose between paying their energy bills and affording other necessities like food and medicine. Access to affordable home energy is a matter of health and safety for many low-income households, children, and seniors.

While we recognize the ongoing discretionary budget challenges, we are increasingly concerned that the number of households eligible for LIHEAP assistance continues to exceed available funding at a time when the average cost of home heating is expected to remain unaffordable for millions of households nationwide. In fact, according to the National Energy Assistance Director's Association, the current funding level is able to serve just 20 percent of the eligible population, and those who receive LIHEAP assistance have seen their average grant reduced by nearly \$100 since 2010, from \$520 in FY 2010 to \$409 in FY 2015. This means that the average LIHEAP grant now covers just a fraction of average home energy costs, leaving many low-income families and seniors struggling to pay for the basic necessity of home energy and having fewer resources available to meet other essential needs.

As you begin the difficult work of crafting the FY 2017 funding bill, we ask that you take into account the great need for LIHEAP and the impact that cuts to the program could have on our most vulnerable citizens. Increased funding for LIHEAP in FY 2017 would ensure that additional, and already eligible, low-income households and seniors receive much needed heating and cooling assistance.

Thank you for your attention to and consideration of this important request. We look forward to continuing to work with you to support this vital program and help provide access to affordable home energy for the most vulnerable households in our states.

Sincerely,



Jack Reed
United States Senator



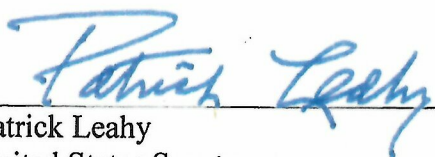
Susan M. Collins
United States Senator



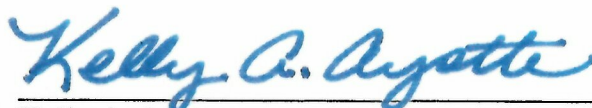
Maria Cantwell
United States Senator



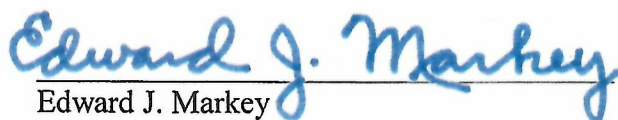
Lisa Murkowski
United States Senator



Patrick Leahy
United States Senator



Kelly A. Ayotte
United States Senator



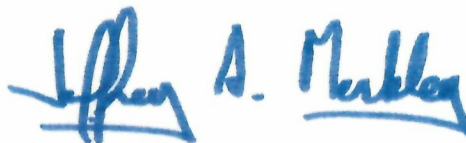
Edward J. Markey
United States Senator



Jeanne Shaheen
United States Senator



Charles E. Schumer
United States Senator



Jeffrey A. Merkley
United States Senator



Mazie K. Hirono
United States Senator



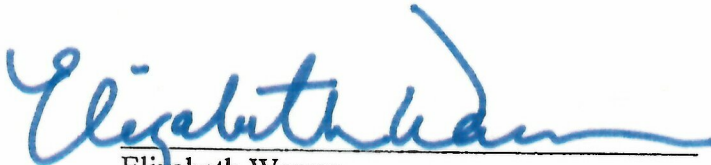
Sheldon Whitehouse
United States Senator



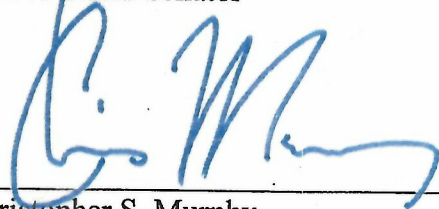
Brian Schatz
United States Senator



Debbie Stabenow
United States Senator



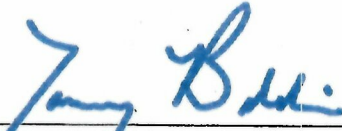
Elizabeth Warren
United States Senator



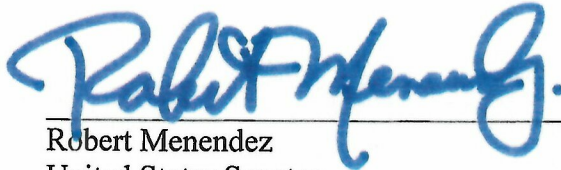
Christopher S. Murphy
United States Senator



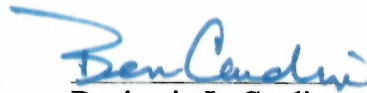
Gary C. Peters
United States Senator



Tammy Baldwin
United States Senator



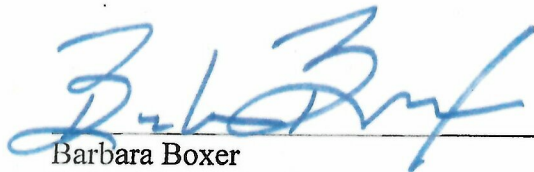
Robert Menendez
United States Senator



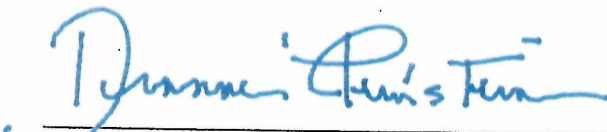
Benjamin L. Cardin
United States Senator



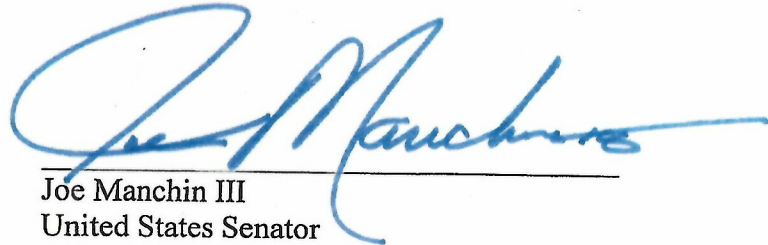
Amy Klobuchar
United States Senator



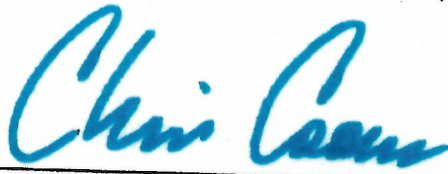
Barbara Boxer
United States Senator



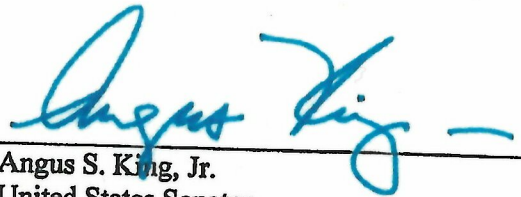
Dianne Feinstein
United States Senator




Joe Manchin III
United States Senator



Christopher A. Coons
United States Senator



Angus S. King, Jr.
United States Senator



Tim Kaine
United States Senator



Jon Tester
United States Senator



Al Franken
United States Senator



Richard J. Durbin
United States Senator



Bernard Sanders
United States Senator



Ron Wyden
United States Senator



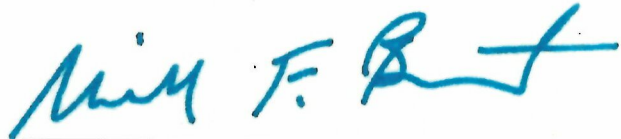
Cory A. Booker
United States Senator



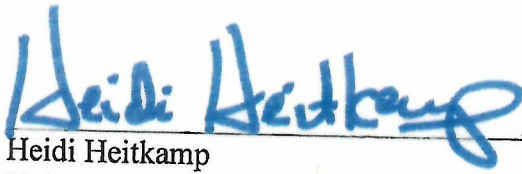
Robert P. Casey, Jr.
United States Senator



Kirsten E. Gillibrand
United States Senator



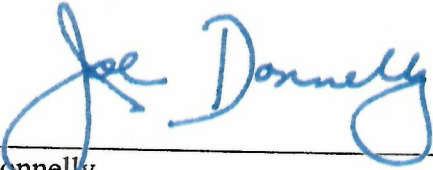
Michael F. Bennet
United States Senator



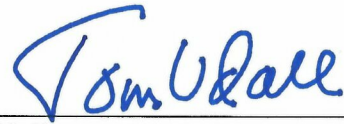
Heidi Heitkamp
United States Senator



Richard Blumenthal
United States Senator



Joe Donnelly
United States Senator



Tom Udall
United States Senator



Sherrod Brown
United States Senator