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# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-4504

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President Donald Trump  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Ave  
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

With Vermonters and Americans across the country struggling to heat their homes this winter, I am writing to you in support of the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program—urging you to fund the program at no less than \$5.1 billion in your Fiscal Year 2019 budget proposal.

The latest polling shows 78% of Americans oppose cutting LIHEAP. Your last budget proposal called for the elimination of the program—a proposal that would have deadly consequences. LIHEAP is the only federal program that helps seniors on fixed incomes, families with children, and persons with disabilities stay warm in the winter and cool in the summer. The program is a lifeline to dignity for 6.8 million families in this country including some 20,000 Vermont families—17% of those Vermont households have young children, 37% have an elderly member, and 48% of those households have a disabled individual.

Funding has been cut from \$5.1 billion in FY 2010 to \$3.39 billion today—a decrease of over \$1.7 billion. What has been the result? The most recent data showed only 16% of those eligible for LIHEAP receive assistance.

The skyrocketing price of home heating is stretching the household budgets of millions of low-income families with children, persons with disabilities, and senior citizens on fixed incomes beyond the breaking point. As of 2015, over half of Vermonters heat their homes with home heating oil. The price of home heating oil has gone up 36% over the last two years while funding for LIHEAP has stayed underfunded at \$3.39 billion. States like Vermont are running out of money as a result. As of February 7<sup>th</sup>, Vermont has used or obligated all of the LIHEAP block grant funds that have been received to date.

In the richest country on Earth, we have a moral responsibility to make sure that no one has to make the unacceptable choice between putting food on the table, paying for their prescription drugs, or heating their homes this winter.

Access to affordable home energy is not a luxury. It is a matter of life and death. In the year 2018, no American should go cold in the wintertime or struggle with cooling their homes in the summertime. At a time when heating oil prices are going up, and when Vermonters and people throughout the country continue to struggle to make ends meet, I would urge you to make it clear to Congress and the American people that LIHEAP must be funded at no less than \$5.1 billion.

Sincerely,



Bernard Sanders  
United States Senator