

CAMPAIGN FOR HOME ENERGY ASSISTANCE

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HOUSE ACTION THREATENS HOME ENERGY SUPPORT FOR MILLIONS OF AMERICANS

Statement of Michael Bracy, Executive Director of the Campaign for Home Energy Assistance, in response to today's House Appropriations Committee vote on the Labor, Health and Human Services and Education Appropriations Bill:

“The House Appropriations Committee voted today to slash over \$1 billion dollars from the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program, threatening assistance to nearly 1 million low-income households that receive emergency assistance with heating and cooling bills.

LIHEAP is a critical resource for poor Americans who are simply unable to pay their heating and cooling bills. Despite wide bipartisan support, LIHEAP has historically faced a funding gap, with less than 15% of eligible households receiving assistance. These funds are only available to citizens who surpass the 150% poverty level, and are truly faced with the “heat or eat” dilemma.

In March of this year, Congress appropriated an additional \$1 billion dollars in response to the crisis in energy prices. According to a report issued this week by the National Energy Assistance Directors Association (NEADA), these additional funds made it possible for an additional 624,115 households to access heating assistance and 279,036 households to receive cooling assistance. While this represents a 12.1% increase in the amount of households receiving heating assistance, and an increase of 88.5% of households receiving cooling aid, it still leaves a significant gap.

LIHEAP is a historically under-funded program. Under the House plan, LIHEAP receives roughly 40% of its authorized amount of \$5.1 billion. This funding gap denies millions of households access to critical aid.

Here's what we know: energy prices are still at record levels. We are heading into another hurricane season. The extra funds Appropriated in March were wisely invested by states across the country to increase the amount of households receiving heating and cooling assistance. And, even with the additional \$1 billion, the LIHEAP program is woefully under-funded. It is absolutely shocking and irresponsible for Congress to deny hundreds of thousands of households access to these emergency funds.

LIHEAP deserves full funding, not a cut of one third.”

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