Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

November 3, 2011

The Honorable John A. Boehner
Speaker
United States House of Representatives
H-232 United States Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Democratic Leader
United States House of Representatives
H-204 The Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Harold Rogers
Chairman
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Norman D. Dicks
Ranking Member
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Speaker Boehner, Leader Pelosi, Chairman Rogers and Ranking Member Dicks:

The Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) provides a vital safety net for our nation's low-income households. As you know, the current Continuing Resolution expires on November 18, 2011. As you work to develop an omnibus appropriations bill for FY2012, we urge you to fund LIHEAP at least at the FY2011 levels of $4.7 billion.

As a result of the economic downturn and continued high and rising energy prices, record numbers of families are turning to LIHEAP for assistance for the third year in a row. According to the National Energy Assistance Director's Association (NEADA), roughly 8.9 million families nationwide received LIHEAP heating assistance last winter, an increase of 16 percent from two years ago. But even at those levels, only roughly 20 percent of the families eligible for assistance received LIHEAP aid. Reducing funding for LIHEAP to under $3.4 billion, as the House Appropriations Committee's draft Labor, Health and Human Services appropriations bill would do, would mean that roughly 2 million families nationwide would no longer be able to receive help from this vital program.

For instance, at the funding levels set forth in the draft House appropriations bill, it would mean a reduction in LIHEAP funds of nearly $180 million for New York, nearly $100 million for Pennsylvania, and nearly $60 million for Massachusetts from last winter. Vermont would lose more than 30 percent of its LIHEAP funds and Connecticut would see a cut of more than 20 percent. This funding level would mean that states like Minnesota and Wisconsin would see their LIHEAP funds cut by nearly half. These significant reductions could have tremendous impacts for low-income families in these states.

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According to a survey conducted by the National Energy Assistance Director's Association, nearly one third of families receiving LIHEAP assistance reported that they went without food during the last five years as a result of high home energy costs. Over 40 percent of families reported sacrificing medical care and 25 percent reported that someone in the home became sick because the home was too cold. Energy is a basic need and without LIHEAP assistance, low income families, senior citizens and the disabled face difficult choices between paying their home energy bills or affording other basic necessities such as prescription drugs or food.

Cutting funding for LIHEAP so dramatically would have a devastating impact on millions of American families already suffering from the economic downturn. We must ensure that the poorest and most vulnerable families can continue to receive help. We therefore urge you to fund this critical program at least at the FY2011 level in FY2012.

Thank you for your continued support of the LIHEAP program and your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,

Edward J. Markey

John B. Larson

James P. McGovern

Peter Welch

Bennie G. Thompson

Barney Frank

Bill Pascrell Jr.

Bob Filner

Chellie Pingree

Christopher S. Murphy

Collin C. Peterson

Brian Higgins

David Loebsack

David Cicilline

Diana DeGette

Donald M. Payne

Emanuel Cleaver

Gary Ackerman

Gene Green

Gwen Moore

Jim Langevin

John Conyers Jr.

John Lewis

John Olver

John Tierney

Judy Chu

Louise Slaughter

Mark Critz

Maurice Hinchey

Maxine Waters

Michael E. Capuano

Mike Doyle

Mike Michaud

Mike Ross

Luis Gutierrez

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Ron Kind

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Steve Israel

Tim Holden

William Keating

Keith Ellison

Frank Pallone Jr.

Jan Schakowsky

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Eliot Engel

Yvette D. Clarke

Ted Deutch

Tammy Baldwin

Dennis J. Kucinich

Edolphus Towns

Sander Levin

Steven Rothman

Albio Sires

Joe Courtney

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Russ Carnahan

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Charles B. Rangel

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Gregorio Kilili Camacho Sablan

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Lou Barletta

Joe Baca

Gary Peters

Eleanor Holmes Norton

Andre Carson

John Dingell

Ben Ray Lujan

Jerrold Nadler

Steve Cohen

Donna Edwards