

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

April 11, 2025

The Honorable Robert F. Kennedy, Jr.  
Secretary  
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services  
200 Independence Avenue, SW  
Washington, D.C., 20201

Dear Secretary Kennedy:

We are strongly opposed to your recent decision to terminate the entire staff responsible for administering the highly successful and efficient Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP). These arbitrary terminations threaten the continued existence of the only federal program in our country that helps millions of seniors on fixed incomes, families with young children, and people with disabilities stay warm in the winter and cool in the summer.

Last year, LIHEAP provided over 6 million American households with the assistance they needed to heat their homes during extremely cold winters and to keep air conditioners running in the soaring heat. Without this bipartisan program, Americans throughout the country would be forced to make the unacceptable choice between putting food on the table, paying for prescription drugs, or heating their homes in the winter. In the richest country in the history of the world, no one should be forced to make that unacceptable decision.

With energy prices and utility bills going up throughout the country, LIHEAP is more important now than ever. Across the United States, more than 23 percent of households report that they were unable to pay their energy bills in full last year.<sup>1</sup> And the administration's recent tariffs are expected to raise utility bills even higher.

States are still waiting on HHS to release nearly \$400 million in Fiscal Year 2025 funding approved by Congress in March to weatherize low-income homes, provide emergency air conditioning assistance and plan for next year's winter season.<sup>2</sup> By terminating all 23 employees tasked with overseeing LIHEAP, it is now unclear how these funds will be administered.<sup>3</sup> In our view, that is unacceptable.

The administration has a legal and moral obligation to disburse LIHEAP funds to states and to uphold the program's promise to help families keep the heat and air condition on. Failure to disburse these funds constitutes an illegal impoundment of bipartisan, congressionally appropriated funds and will put the health and well-being of some of the most vulnerable people in America at risk.

<sup>1</sup> [https://www.census.gov/data-tools/demo/hhp/#/?measures=ENERGYBILL&s\\_state=](https://www.census.gov/data-tools/demo/hhp/#/?measures=ENERGYBILL&s_state=)

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/04/02/climate/trump-layoffs-energy-assistance-liheap.html>

<sup>3</sup> <https://acf.gov/ocs/contact-information/liheap-contact-information-division-energy-assistance-federal-staff>

Therefore, we urge you to immediately reinstate all of the LIHEAP staff that were terminated, reopen the Division of Energy Assistance (DEA) that administers this program, and disburse all of the LIHEAP funds that Congress has appropriated.

Being able to heat your home in the freezing cold and keep the air condition on in the extreme heat is not a luxury. It is a matter of life and death.

Please provide us with a written response to the questions below no later than the next ten days.

1. Will you reinstate the staff who administer LIHEAP and reopen the office that administers this program?
2. When will HHS disburse the remaining \$378 million that Congress appropriated for the current fiscal year?
3. How many employees of DEA have been fired, put on administrative leave, accepted the deferred resignation program offer, or accepted the Voluntary Early Retirement Authority or Voluntary Separation Incentive Payment offer since January 20, 2025?
  - a. How many of these employees were responsible for, or assisted in, administering LIHEAP?
  - b. How many of these employees worked in regional offices? Please provide information on the number of employees remaining at each regional office.
  - c. How many employees responsible for, or assisting in, administering LIHEAP remain in force?
4. Which officials at HHS were involved in the staffing reduction decisions for DEA and what planning, if any, was undertaken prior to these reductions? Please describe the events that unfolded and name each office that was involved in the decision. Further, please name the official(s) who approved the staffing reductions as well as specifically indicate if any of the below individuals, or direct reports to these individuals, were involved in the decision-making. Name any such direct reports.
  - a. Elon Musk, Special Government Employee, DOGE.
  - b. Amy Gleason, Acting Administrator, DOGE.
  - c. Andrew Gradison, Acting Assistant Secretary, ACF.
5. Please provide a detailed plan for how HHS plans to staff and oversee LIHEAP, including the plan to oversee states and territories in administering this program going forward and how you will ensure continued execution of its critical mission and also ensure no family loses access to utility assistance.
  - a. Please describe how ACF plans to monitor the impact that these dismissals have on LIHEAP and the millions who rely on it.

- b. Please provide information on who will review and approve LIHEAP annual plans in a timely manner.
- c. Please provide information on who will carry out statutorily required data collection on LIHEAP.

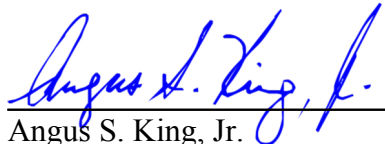
Sincerely,



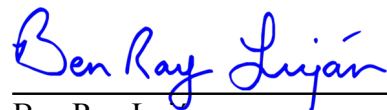
Bernard Sanders  
United States Senator  
Ranking Member, Committee  
on Health, Education, Labor,  
and Pensions



Jack Reed  
United States Senator



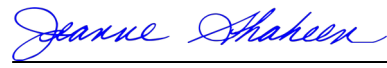
Angus S. King, Jr.  
United States Senator



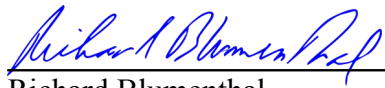
Ben Ray Lujan  
United States Senator



Mazie K. Hirono  
United States Senator



Jeanne Shaheen  
United States Senator



Richard Blumenthal  
United States Senator




Chris Van Hollen  
United States Senator



Kirsten Gillibrand  
United States Senator



Charles E. Schumer  
United States Senator



Tina Smith  
United States Senator



John Fetterman  
United States Senator



Amy Klobuchar  
United States Senator



Elizabeth Warren  
United States Senator



Cory A. Booker  
United States Senator



Tammy Duckworth  
United States Senator



Lisa Blunt Rochester  
United States Senator



Sheldon Whitehouse  
United States Senator



Raphael Warnock  
United States Senator



Andy Kim  
United States Senator



Tim Kaine  
United States Senator



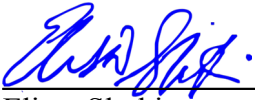
Edward J. Markey  
United States Senator



Tammy Baldwin  
United States Senator

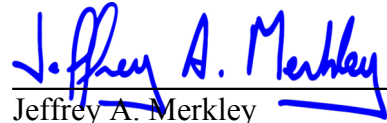


Margaret Wood Hassan  
United States Senator



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Elissa Slotkin  
United States Senator



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Jeffrey A. Merkley  
United States Senator



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Richard J. Durbin  
United States Senator



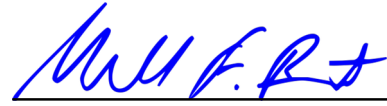
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Angela Alsobrooks  
United States Senator



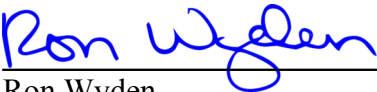
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Jacky Rosen  
U.S. Senator



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Michael F. Bennet  
United States Senator



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Ron Wyden  
United States Senator  
Ranking Member, Committee  
on Finance