United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

November 22, 2010

The Honorable Daniel Inouye
Chairman
Committee on Appropriations
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Thad Cochran
Ranking Member
Committee on Appropriations
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Tom Harkin
Chairman
Committee on Appropriations
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human
Services, Education, and Related Agencies
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Inouye, Ranking Member Cochran, and Chairman Harkin:

We write to thank you for your consistent support of the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) and to request that you maintain level funding for the program.

As you know, on October 28th, the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) released block grant assistance to states under the Continuing Resolution (CR), which funds the federal government at Fiscal Year 2010 levels through December 3rd. Although the CR funded LIHEAP at last year's level of $5.1 billion, due to the differences in discretionary spending levels reported in the House and Senate, HHS provided grants to states based upon the lower reported value. The results have been devastating for our states during a period when we are entering the coldest months of the year and facing increased heating bills, in particular for homes heated with heating oil, which face a 12 percent increase in costs, as forecasted by the Energy Information Administration. Consequently, unless Congress maintains fiscal year 2010 funding levels for this critical program, the average LIHEAP block grant to states will be cut by 40 percent.

This is a challenging time for low-income Americans. With the unemployment rate at 9.6% nationwide and 42.4 million people receiving Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) support in August, another record and a 50% increase over 2008, maintaining full funding for LIHEAP is essential. The U.S. Census recently reported that 43.6 million people were counted as poor in the United States, or one in seven Americans, the largest number in the measure's 50-year recorded history.

Given the unique structure of the program, unless we finalize funding for the remainder of Fiscal Year 2011 now, the millions of Americans who need help paying their energy bills this

winter could see no additional assistance. As such, under any appropriations bill that Congress considers prior to the expiration of the CR, we would request that you extend LIHEAP's funding through September 30th, 2011, at last year's funding levels. This would provide stability to the program and allow HHS to allocate LIHEAP funds in a timely manner to provide vital heating assistance this winter.

Again, we want to thank you for your commitment to helping low-income families cope during this tough economic climate, and look forward to working together in a fiscally responsible manner to address this serious issue.

Sincerely,

Jack Reed

Olympia J. Snowe

Sherrod Brown

Susan M. Collins

Patrick J. Leahy

Christopher S. Bond

Barbara A. Mikulski

Richard G. Lugar

Herb Kohl

Scott P. Brown

Patty Murray

Frank R. Lautenberg

Tim Johnson

Mary L. Landrieu

Christopher J. Dodd

Bernard Sanders

Jeanne Shaheen

Charles E. Schumer

Joseph I. Lieberman

Russell D. Feingold

John F. Kerry

Jeff Bingaman

Carl Levin

Kirsten E. Gillibrand

Sheldon Whitehouse

Roland W. Burris

Ron Wyden

Claire McCaskill

Robert P. Casey, Jr.

Robert Menendez

Maria Cantwell

Al Franken

Michael F. Bennet

Debbie Stabenow

Amy Klobuchar

Mark Begich

John D. Rockefeller IV

Benjamin L. Cardin

Jim Webb

Jon Tester

Jeff Merkley

Blanche L. Lincoln

Lisa Murkowski

Tom Udall