

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

May 6, 2020

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Majority Leader
United States Senate
S-230, U.S. Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Charles Schumer
Minority Leader
Committee on Appropriations
S-220, U.S. Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Majority Leader McConnell and Minority Leader Schumer:

As you work to craft another recovery package to help Americans cope with the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic, we respectfully request that you provide robust supplemental funding that reflects the increased need for the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP). The LIHEAP program, as an existing block grant, is well-positioned to continue to quickly respond to and support the needs of millions of American households affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. Further, we request robust supplemental funding for the Weatherization Assistance Program (WAP) to support the weatherization workforce following the pandemic.

We appreciate the \$900 million included in the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act for LIHEAP. The National Energy Assistance Directors' Association estimates that this amount will help approximately 3 million households, including those currently receiving LIHEAP and new households facing recent unemployment. It is clear, however, that additional funding is needed as more than 30 million Americans filed for unemployment since the emergency began. As the economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic continues to spread, it is disproportionately affecting low-wage workers and our nation's seniors. LIHEAP assistance is an indispensable lifeline, helping to ensure that recipients do not have to choose between paying their energy bills and affording other necessities like food and medicine. States energy officials have reported that they are ready to move additional LIHEAP funds quickly and have identified a need for \$4.3 billion to serve more than 11 million households. Despite the challenges of switching from in-person applications to telephone or mail, states are making the necessary changes to keep their programs open and continue providing service to American families in need.

Another action that Congress should take is increasing funding for the Weatherization Assistance Program. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, workers are increasingly being furloughed or laid off because they can't get into homes and businesses to do work as a result of health risks, and at least 22 states have temporarily shut down Weatherization Assistance Programs. Increasing funding for this program will support the weatherization workforce and help low-income families, seniors, and individuals with disabilities make lasting energy efficiency improvements to their homes once the pandemic has passed. Money can be spent in advance of the coming winter and make energy bills lower not only this year, but for years to come. Reduced energy costs free up limited financial resources for essentials, such as food and medicine. Throughout the history of the program, which has spanned more than four decades, WAP has helped more than 7.4 million low-income households reduce their energy bills. An

independent study of WAP by Oak Ridge National Laboratory found that each Weatherization Assistance dollar produces \$4.50 in benefits.

Thank you for your consideration of our request, and we look forward to working with you to support these important programs in this time of crisis.

Sincerely,



Jack Reed
United States Senator



Susan M. Collins
United States Senator



Jeanne Shaheen
United States Senator



John Hoeven
United States Senator

CC: Chairman Richard Shelby
Ranking Member Patrick Leahy