

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-2102

October 13, 2011

The President
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20502

Dear Mr. President:

In light of new and alarming projections about the cost of home heating oil in New England this coming winter, I am writing to appeal early in the budgeting process for special attention to the Low Income Home Energy Heating Assistance Program (LIHEAP) program which, as you know, has sustained severe and damaging cuts over the last several years despite a growing need. I respectfully request \$5.1 be included for LIHEAP in the administration's budget request for Fiscal Year 2013.

Serving on the Joint Select Committee for Deficit reduction, I am particularly aware of our difficult budget situation and the need to make difficult choices now and in the future. However, I want to stress, as you have, that it is wrong to disproportionately squeeze programs that are a lifeline, literally, for seniors and the working poor who have already been disproportionately hurt by the economic conditions of the last years. Those who need assistance from LIHEAP the most are often "Greatest Generation seniors" who have contributed to our country all their lives and now live on fixed incomes, in addition to low income working families struggling to pay rent and keep their heads above water in a difficult economy. In writing a 2013 budget, they should not be the first to be asked to sacrifice.

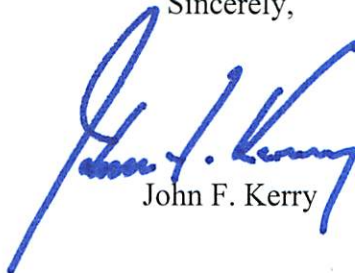
There are over 880,000 households in Massachusetts alone that use home heating oil to survive our harsh winters – and with the increase in prices we are already seeing many of them apply for assistance. It is estimated that the average household will have to spend \$2,493 this heating season compared to \$2,300 last year. Last year the maximum LIHEAP amount awarded to the neediest families in Massachusetts was \$1,090 – if faced with further cuts this amount could be cut in half leaving many of my constituents facing a \$2,000 shortfall. Given these limited family budgets, cuts would mean many may have to choose between heating their homes, cutting back on medications or feeding their families. These are choices American families should never have to make, even in a time of fiscal restraint. Home heating oil is too critical an issue of economic survival for many in New England to have it fall in the order of federal priorities, especially as new reports show the price for oil continues its upward trend resulting in record highs in Massachusetts and across the country.

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While increases are needed in this area, I understand the restraints put on the budget. I therefore ask that the administration request to fund LIHEAP at least to the Fiscal Year 2010 funding level of \$5.1 billion when it submits its Fiscal Year 2013 budget proposal to Congress. I will also continue to pursue other avenues to help ensure relief for seniors and working poor families this winter as they struggle with home heating oil costs, and look forward to collaborating with your Administration on some of those other possibilities as well.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



John F. Kerry