

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

October 4, 2022

Lauren Christopher
Director
Department of Health and Human Services
Division of Energy Assistance
Mary E. Switzer Building, 5th Floor
330 C Street, SW
Washington, D.C. 20201

Dear Director Lauren Christopher,

Over the last several months, world energy markets have experienced massive fluctuations on account of Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine. Unfortunately, these reverberations will soon be acutely felt at home throughout our communities as winter sets in. This is compounded by the COVID pandemic, which has stretched global supply chains thin and increased the cost of energy. Together, these forces will likely increase power bills in Massachusetts by over 60 percent compared to last winter as prices continue to surge for natural gas, the energy source responsible for over half of New England's electricity.¹ This dramatic cost increase will come at a time when people are already burdened by increased energy costs from the previous winter when over 750,000 Massachusetts households fell behind on their power bills.² Urgent relief is required for our communities lest they suffer unnecessarily because of Putin's ruthless aggression and determination to weaponize energy prices. We therefore write to urge the Division of Energy Assistance to expedite the release of block grant funding to Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) grantees given the increasing cost of energy sources and extreme cold weather anticipated for this winter season.

States, territories, and tribes are eagerly awaiting access to these LIHEAP grants as they have already submitted their plans for distributing these funds for the upcoming fiscal year. Though LIHEAP funds in recent years have been released in early November, we know from past data that it is possible for funds to be released as soon as mid-October.³ The historic investment in LIHEAP in FY2022 and the additional \$1 billion included in the continuing resolution for federal government funding highlights the importance of this program. We urge the Division of Energy Assistance to release these funds as soon as possible so that they may have the maximum impact possible.

¹ Chesto, Jon, *Your electric bill may go up by more than 60 percent this winter. Here's why.*, Boston Globe, September 2022 at: <https://www.bostonglobe.com/2022/09/21/business/your-electric-bill-is-about-go-up-heres-why/>

² *Massachusetts Residential Utility Customers Still Owe Nearly \$100M More in Arrears Than at the Start of the Pandemic*, National Consumer Law Center, February 2022 at: <https://www.nclc.org/resources/massachusetts-residential-utility-customers-still-owe-nearly-100m-more-in-arrears-than-at-the-start-of-the-pandemic/>

³ *LIHEAP and WAP Funding*, LIHEAP Clearinghouse at: <https://liheapch.acf.hhs.gov/Funding/funding.htm>

Thank you for all the work you do to ensure LIHEAP continues to reach our most vulnerable communities and for your attention to this request.

Sincerely,



Lori Trahan
Member of Congress



Richard E. Neal
Member of Congress



James P. McGovern
Member of Congress



Jake Auchincloss
Member of Congress



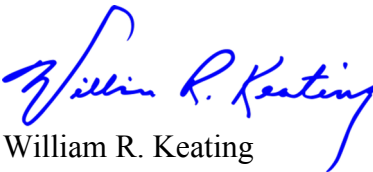
Seth Moulton
Member of Congress



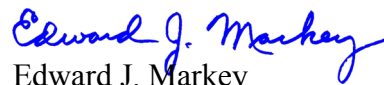
Ayanna Pressley
Member of Congress



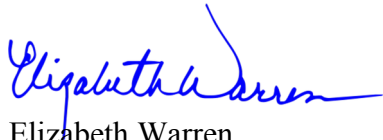
Stephen F. Lynch
Member of Congress



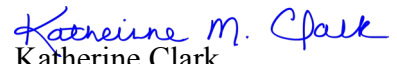
William R. Keating
Member of Congress



Edward J. Markey
United States Senator



Elizabeth Warren
United States Senator



Katherine Clark
Member of Congress