

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

April 13, 2018

The Honorable Roy Blunt
Chairman
Committee on Appropriations
Subcommittee on Labor, HHS, Education
and Related Agencies
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Patty Murray
Ranking Member
Committee on Appropriations
Subcommittee on Labor, HHS, Education
and Related Agencies
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Blunt and Ranking Member Murray:

We write in support of the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) and to express our deep concern with the President's proposal to eliminate funding for this safety-net program in fiscal year (FY) 2019. We appreciate the Committee providing increased funding for LIHEAP in FY 2018 and request that you continue to prioritize funding for this vital program in FY 2019 to help ensure that it meets the needs of eligible low-income households and seniors.

LIHEAP is the main federal program that helps low-income households and seniors with their energy bills, providing vital assistance during both the cold winter and hot summer months. 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. Access to affordable home energy is a matter of health and safety for many low-income households, children, and seniors.

While we recognize ongoing discretionary budget challenges, we are increasingly concerned that the number of households eligible for LIHEAP assistance continues to exceed available funding. This is at a time when the average cost of home heating and cooling remains unaffordable for many households nationwide. According to the National Energy Assistance Director's Association, the current funding level is able to serve just one out of five eligible households, and those who receive LIHEAP assistance have seen their average grant reduced by about \$110 since 2010, from \$568 in FY 2010 to \$458 in FY 2017. Moreover, the share of home heating covered by the average grant during this period also declined from about 66 percent in FY 2010 to 57 percent in FY 2017. This means that the average LIHEAP grant now covers a lower portion of average home energy costs, leaving many low-income families and seniors struggling to pay for the basic necessity of home energy and having fewer resources available to meet other essential needs.


As you begin the difficult work of crafting the FY 2019 funding bill, we thank you again for your past support of the program and ask that you continue to take into account the great need for LIHEAP and the impact that cuts to the program could have on our most vulnerable citizens. Prioritizing LIHEAP in FY 2019 would ensure that eligible, low-income households and seniors receive much needed heating and cooling assistance.

Thank you for your attention to and consideration of our request. We look forward to continuing to work with you to support this important program and to help provide access to affordable home energy for the most vulnerable households in our states.


Sincerely,




Jack Reed
U.S. Senator



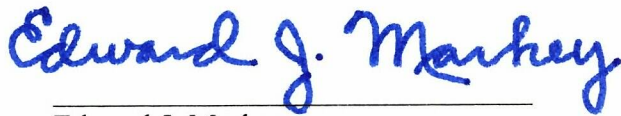
Susan M. Collins
U.S. Senator




Jeanne Shaheen
U.S. Senator



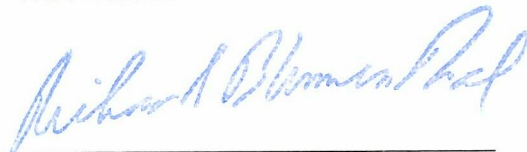
Lisa Murkowski
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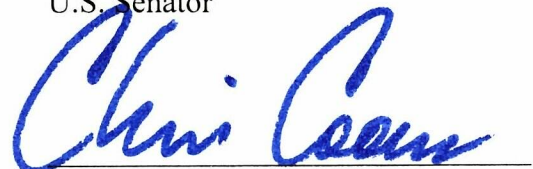
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Brian Schatz
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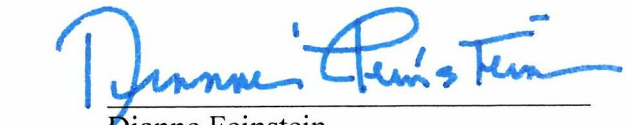
Richard Blumenthal
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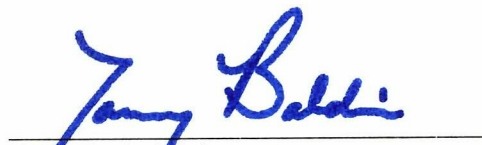
Christopher A. Coons
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Sheldon Whitehouse
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Dianne Feinstein
U.S. Senator



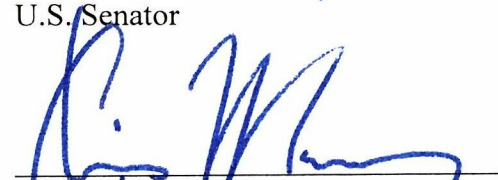
Tammy Baldwin
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Thomas R. Carper
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Sherrod Brown
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Christopher S. Murphy
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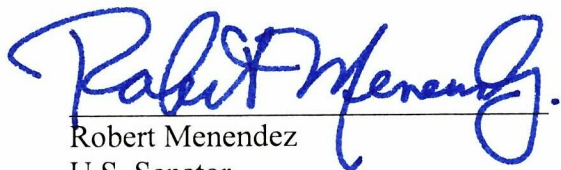
Margaret Wood Hassan
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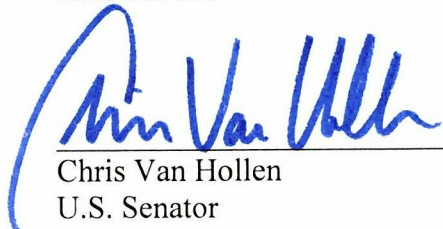
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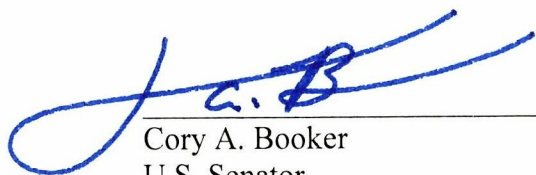
Tammy Duckworth
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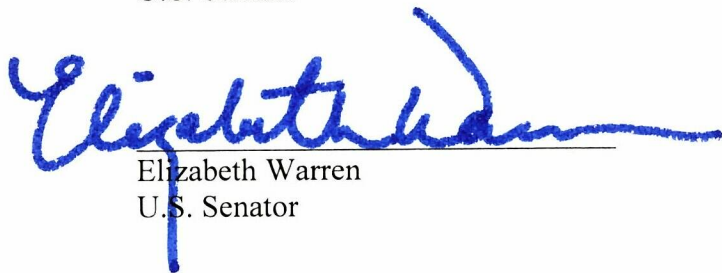
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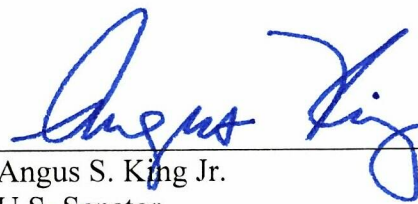
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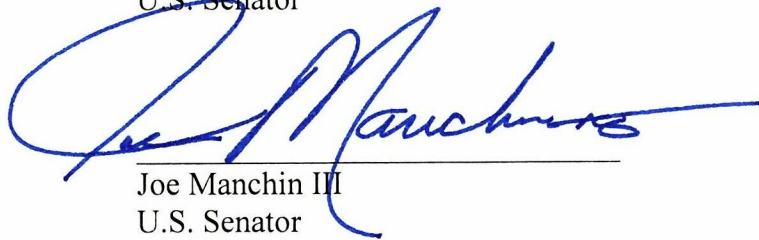
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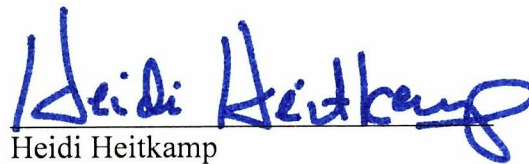
Joe Manchin III
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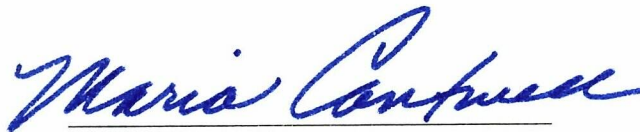
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Mazie Hirono
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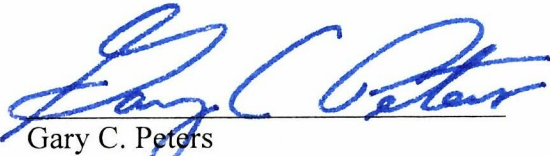
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Gary C. Peters
U.S. Senator



Ron Wyden
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Benjamin L. Cardin
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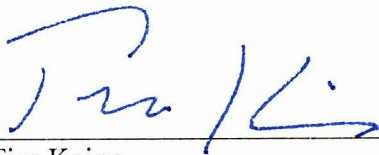
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