

October 5, 2015

The Honorable Sylvia Burwell
Secretary
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
Hubert H. Humphrey Building
200 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20201

Dear Secretary Burwell,

The Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) is a vital lifeline to the millions of very low-income families and seniors across the country struggling to afford the basic necessity of home energy. To ensure the greatest efficiency in planning and delivering urgently needed LIHEAP assistance, the Coalition of Northeastern Governors (CONEG) urges you to release without delay the maximum level of LIHEAP funding possible under the current continuing resolution (CR).

As winter weather arrives in the Northeast, any delay in providing LIHEAP assistance creates considerable challenges for vulnerable households trying to stay safe and warm this winter. The timely release of LIHEAP funds is critically important to ensure that benefits can be provided in an administratively efficient manner to those households with the most immediate needs. In the Northeast where temperatures dip below freezing in early October, receiving a LIHEAP benefit at the beginning of the heating season can mean the restoration of disconnected utility service or the delivery of vital home heating fuel before winter weather becomes deadly.

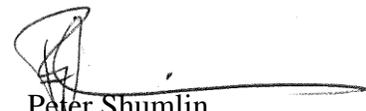
A CR creates unique challenges for the nation's cold weather states. In these states, almost all LIHEAP funds are obligated in the first quarter of the fiscal year. When the timing and level of available federal LIHEAP funding under the CR are uncertain, states face difficulty in finalizing benefit levels and processing timely payments to utilities, vendors or oil dealers.

We welcome prompt action by the Department to release without delay, the maximum level of LIHEAP funding available under the current continuing resolution. The need is immediate and great.

Sincerely,


Dannel P. Malloy
Governor of Connecticut
CONEG Chair


Charles D. Baker
Governor of Massachusetts
CONEG Vice-Chair


Peter Shumlin
Governor of Vermont
CONEG Lead Governor for
LIHEAP