

*After HHS release of immediate LIHEAP funds last week, lawmakers call on House leadership to maintain \$4.7 billion funding level in FY2012 budget*

**WASHINGTON, D.C.** – Representatives Edward J. Markey (D-Mass.), James P. McGovern (D-Mass.), John B. Larson (D-Conn.), and Peter Welch (D-Vt.) sent a letter to House leadership urging them to fund the Low Income Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) at least at the FY2011 level of \$4.7 billion. With record numbers of American families turning to LIHEAP for the third year in a row, maintaining funding at current levels will mean families will not have to choose between heating their homes and food, medications or other basic needs. The funding levels set forth in the draft House appropriations bill would result in a reduction in LIHEAP funds of nearly \$60 million for Massachusetts from last winter. Vermont would lose more than 30 percent of its LIHEAP funds and Connecticut would see a cut of more than 20 percent.

A copy of the letter to House leadership can be found [HERE](#) .

**“Without home heating support, Massachusetts residents literally would be left out in the cold,”** said Rep. Markey. **“There are difficult budget decisions to be made as we work to reduce the deficit, but American families shouldn’t have to decide between heating and eating this winter. With the costs of home heating fuel rising across the board, we should not subject this critical program to draconian cuts.”**

**“The LIHEAP program is absolutely essential to keeping thousands of our most vulnerable neighbors warm in the winter,”** said Rep. McGovern. **“To cut LIHEAP funds during these difficult economic times would force too many people to choose between rent, food, medicine and heat. That would be unacceptable, and I urge the House leadership to fund LIHEAP at appropriate levels.”**

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**“Already, winter has hit Connecticut and the northeast leaving many people with the anxiety of how to pay for an extra long season of keeping their families warm,”** said Rep.

Larson.

**“For years, the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) has played a major role in ensuring that low-income families are able to meet their home energy needs, and this year should be no different.□ As the expiration of funding for the government fast approaches, I urge my colleagues on the appropriations committee to fund LIHEAP at the very least, last year’s funding levels and make sure everyone who needs energy assistance has it.”**

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**“Even in good economic times, LIHEAP is a critical lifeline for countless Vermonters,”** said Rep. Welch.

**“Now, with wages stagnant, a tough economy, rising fuel prices and Vermonters struggling to recover from Tropical Storm Irene, it is even more critical. Winter is upon us in the northeast and we need to get the money to those who need it now.”**

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The Department of Energy is reporting an increase in the price for most heating fuels this winter, with home heating oil expected to reach record highs across America this winter. The National Energy Assistance Directors’ Association anticipates 9.4 million households will seek assistance with their energy costs through the LIHEAP program this winter, up from 8.9 million last year. The funding level of \$3.4 billion for LIHEAP in the draft House Labor HHS appropriations bill for the remainder of FY2012 would allow assistance for only seven million households.

Last month, Reps. Markey, LaTourette, McGovern, Larson and Welch sent a [letter](#) from a bipartisan coalition of lawmakers calling on HHS to immediately release as much LIHEAP funding as possible under the current continuing resolution that expires November 18, 2011.

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