

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

October 25, 2018

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Majority Leader
U.S. Senate
317 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Charles E. Schumer
Democratic Leader
U.S. Senate
322 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Richard Shelby
Chairman
U.S. Senate Committee on Appropriations
Room S-128, The Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Patrick Leahy
Vice Chairman
U.S. Senate Committee on Appropriations
Room S-128, The Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Leader McConnell, Leader Schumer, Chairman Shelby and Vice Chairman Leahy:

We write to request your support for the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) Emergency Contingency Fund. As the Appropriations Committee works to fund federal agencies currently under a Continuing Resolution beyond December 9, we ask that you provide funding to the LIHEAP emergency fund in order to help residents of the Merrimack Valley in Massachusetts afford home heating after the recent disaster that has left thousands of residents without natural gas.

LIHEAP emergency funds can be distributed at the discretion of the Secretary of Health and Human Services in a manner that meets “the additional home energy assistance needs of one or more states arising from a natural disaster or other emergency.”¹ This would allow the Secretary to provide assistance to respond to an ongoing crisis in Massachusetts.

On September 13, a surge in gas pressure resulted in explosions and long-term damage to the natural gas distribution system in Andover, North Andover, and Lawrence, Massachusetts. Because of this disaster, thousands of residents have no gas service and are likely to remain without service through mid- to late November. Overnight temperatures have already dipped below freezing in the region, and many homes have turned to electric heating options, including space heaters.

Residents are now being forced to heat homes using space heaters running on electricity. However, electric home heating is significantly more expensive than natural gas. According to

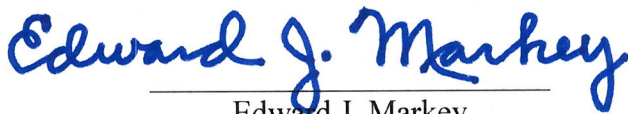
¹ 42 U.S.C. §8621(e)

the U.S. Energy Information Administration's Winter Fuels Outlook, an average consumer in the Northeast will pay \$1,447 for electric heating this winter, compared to \$723 for natural gas heating.² As a result, heating assistance agencies are likely to go through their regular LIHEAP funds faster than usual, potentially leaving families without help toward the end of the winter.

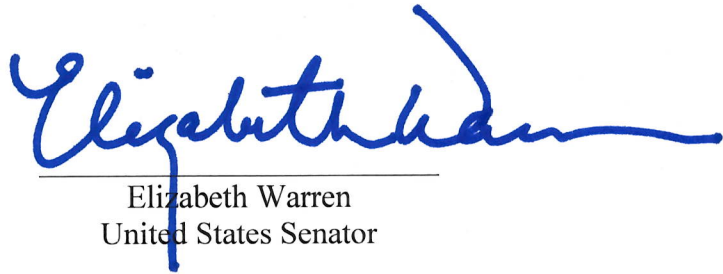
For these reasons, we ask for your support of the LIHEAP Emergency Contingency Fund to provide financial support for struggling households in the Merrimack Valley. Residents of Lawrence, North Andover, and Andover are struggling to recover from this long-term disruption to their lives and their businesses, and their heightened need for heating support is exactly what this emergency fund was intended to address. Without it, the unexpectedly higher costs of these residents' home heating needs may mean that the state will lack the necessary funds to address other low-income residents' heating needs by the end of the winter.

Thank you very much for considering our request. We look forward to working with you to provide critical heating assistance to the residents of Massachusetts impacted by this disaster.

Sincerely,



Edward J. Markey
United States Senator



Elizabeth Warren
United States Senator

² "Average Consumer Prices and Expenditures for Heating Fuels During the Winter," U.S. Energy Information Administration