Dear Mr. President:

We are writing to request that you prioritize the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) by providing no less than $4.7 billion for the program in your Fiscal Year (FY) 2017 budget proposal.

LIHEAP provides vital assistance to low income households, seniors, and veterans in both the cold winter and hot summer months by helping with their energy bills. According to the National Energy Assistance Director's Association, more than 90 percent of LIHEAP recipients have at least one household member who is a child, elderly, or disabled, and 20 percent of households include at least one veteran. This funding continues to be a lifeline for some of our most vulnerable citizens. Moreover, as some parts of our country continue to face rising energy costs, LIHEAP helps to ensure that people do not have to choose between paying their energy bills and paying for food or medicine.

We are deeply concerned that the number of households eligible for LIHEAP assistance continues to exceed available funding while the average cost of home heating is expected to remain unaffordable for millions of households nationwide. In fact, the current funding level is able to serve just 20 percent of the eligible population, and those who receive LIHEAP assistance have seen their average grant reduced by $107 since 2010 from $520 to $413.

Additionally, the purchasing power of LIHEAP has declined in recent years. The average LIHEAP grant has fallen from 60 percent in 2010 to nearly 47 percent of the cost of home heating. For households using delivered fuels, this decline is even more dramatic, covering just 18 percent of heating oil and propane costs. With the average LIHEAP grant estimated to cover less than half of the average home heating costs for a household this winter, many low income families and seniors will struggle to pay for the basic necessity of home energy and will have fewer resources available to meet other essential needs.

As you finalize your FY 2017 budget request, we ask that you take into account the high demand for LIHEAP assistance and restore funding to this program to a level no less than $4.7 billion.

Thank you for your time and attention to consider this important request.

Sincerely,

[Signatures]

Jack Reed
United States Senator

Susan Collins
United States Senator

cc: Shaun Donovan, Director, Office of Management and Budget
Silvia Mathews Burwell, Secretary, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
Joe Donnelly
United States Senator

Brian Schatz
United States Senator

Elizabeth Warren
United States Senator

Gary Peters
United States Senator

Robert Menendez
United States Senator

Chris Murphy
United States Senator