

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

April 8, 2020

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker of the House
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy
Minority Leader
U.S House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Speaker Pelosi and Minority Leader McCarthy,

As you craft the next package of relief measures in response to the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, we respectfully request that you provide no less than \$4,300,000,000 in supplemental funding for the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP). We also urge you to include additional authority and funds to allow assistance similar to LIHEAP to be provided to benefit households economically affected by COVID-19 with drinking water and wastewater services during this national emergency.

No one should be forced to choose between paying their energy bills and paying for food. As our constituents face the economic consequences of COVID-19, this is becoming a reality for far too many working families. In our efforts to respond to the pandemic, we must make the health and well-being of our most vulnerable communities a top priority. We appreciate your work to secure \$900 million for LIHEAP in the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act, but much more is needed to meet the growing need for assistance. In a typical year, LIHEAP serves only a fraction of the households eligible for assistance. Many more households will need and likely qualify for assistance in the coming weeks and months.

Workers are on the frontlines of this pandemic, and it is our responsibility to make sure they can access necessary wraparound services. Last month nearly ten million workers filed unemployment claims in a two-week period, surpassing previous records. This represents just the first wave of the economic consequences from COVID-19. The Economic Policy Institute recently forecasted that nearly 20 million workers will be laid off or furloughed by July 2020. We are expecting that more claims will be filed in the coming days and weeks. Additionally, as individuals comply with stay at home orders across the country during the pandemic, they will likely be using more electricity and heat or air conditioning to keep their homes habitable. Increased funding for LIHEAP would provide tangible assistance to families who are struggling to pay their bills.

Low-income households, especially in the face of this crisis, need help with all of their utility bills. LIHEAP is an important service for energy costs, but we urge you to include language in the next response package to provide similar assistance for drinking water and wastewater utility costs during the COVID-19 pandemic. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has stressed the importance of handwashing to help limit the spread of COVID-19. Now more than

ever access to water and wastewater services is critical to protecting our communities. During this national emergency, low-income households and households otherwise affected by the economic consequences of this outbreak need a proven mechanism like LIHEAP to assist with drinking water and wastewater services.

Low-income families and households and those more recently affected by the COVID-19 outbreak are struggling, and Congress must provide the resources to access basic necessities during this pandemic. With meaningful investments, we can expand access to LIHEAP for millions of families and provide significant relief as they cope with the consequences of COVID-19. Thank you for your attention to these critical issues. We look forward to continuing to work with you to make funding for LIHEAP a priority.

Sincerely,



Suzanne Bonamici
Member of Congress



Debbie Dingell
Member of Congress



Rashida Tlaib
Member of Congress

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