

May 23, 2025

The Honorable Shelley Moore Capito  
Chair  
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human  
Services, Education, and Related Agencies  
United States Senate  
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Tammy Baldwin  
Ranking Member  
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human  
Services, Education, and Related Agencies  
United States Senate  
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Robert Aderholt  
Chair  
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human  
Services, Education, and Related Agencies  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Rosa DeLauro  
Ranking Member  
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human  
Services, Education, and Related Agencies  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, D.C. 20515

**Re: Request for Full Funding of the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) in FY2026 Appropriations**

Dear Chair Capito, Ranking Member Baldwin, Chair Aderholt, and Ranking Member DeLauro,

On behalf of WE ACT for Environmental Justice, a community-based nonprofit organization dedicated to advancing environmental justice and equitable climate resilience, as well as the undersigned organizations, we respectfully urge the Subcommittee to appropriate the maximum authorized level of **\$5.1 billion** for the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) in the Fiscal Year 2026 Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies Appropriations bill. In addition, with recent news that the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) have illegally fired the entire office responsible for implementing the LIHEAP program, we demand assurances that the LIHEAP program be fully staffed moving forward.

**LIHEAP: A Crucial Safety Net for Low-Income Households**

LIHEAP is a vital federal program that helps millions of Americans maintain safe home temperatures. In FY2023 alone, it served approximately 5.3 million households nationwide, yet reached only about 20% of eligible families due to chronic underfunding.<sup>1</sup> LIHEAP serves many households consisting of seniors, individuals with disabilities, or young children—all groups acutely vulnerable to heat stress and cold exposure.

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<sup>1</sup> U.S. Dep't of Health & Hum. Servs., Off. of Cmty. Servs., LIHEAP Clearinghouse Data, <https://liheapch.acf.hhs.gov> (last visited Apr. 22, 2025).

In New York City, nearly 30% of households are energy burdened, meaning they spend more than 6% of their income on utilities.<sup>2</sup> This burden disproportionately falls on low-income Black and Latino residents in historically redlined neighborhoods such as the South Bronx, East New York, and Central Harlem—areas where residents are also more likely to live in poorly insulated and energy-inefficient housing.

## **Climate Change, Energy Insecurity, and Environmental Justice**

With increasing climate volatility, energy insecurity has become a public health crisis. In 2023, New York City experienced more days above 90°F than any year in the past decade.<sup>3</sup> These extreme heat events exacerbate health disparities in neighborhoods with higher asthma rates, air pollution, and limited access to green infrastructure. The deadly 2019 heat wave, which claimed multiple lives in NYC public housing, underscores the urgent need for federal support.<sup>4</sup>

LIHEAP not only helps households pay their utility bills, but also supports weatherization and energy efficiency improvements, which reduce long-term costs and improve resilience to extreme weather, critical for frontline communities already bearing the brunt of environmental degradation.

## **Recent Federal Disruptions Undermine Local Response**

We are deeply troubled by recent administrative disruptions at the Department of Health and Human Services, including the reported layoffs of the LIHEAP oversight staff and the subsequent delay of \$378 million in previously appropriated funds.<sup>5</sup> These disruptions jeopardize the continuity of life-saving assistance, placing additional strain on state and municipal agencies tasked with implementing the program on the ground.

As a result, states like New York are forced to operate under uncertainty, delaying outreach and enrollment while vulnerable residents face another summer of dangerous heat without assurance of relief. The summer months are crucial because over the past few years, the LIHEAP program in New York State has consistently run out of funding in early July, the part of the summer most

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<sup>2</sup> N.Y.C. Env't Just. All., NYC Energy Burden Report (2023), <https://www.nyc-eja.org/publications/energyburden2023>.

<sup>3</sup> N.Y.C. Mayor's Off. of Resiliency, 2023 Climate Resiliency Progress Report (2024), <https://www.nyc.gov/climate-resiliency-report>

<sup>4</sup> Mireya Navarro, NYCHA Tenants Died in Heat Wave. Could It Have Been Prevented?, N.Y. Times (July 26, 2019), <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/07/26/nyregion/nycha-heatwave-deaths.html>.

<sup>5</sup> Michael R. Sisak, Trump Administration Fires Staff of Program That Helps Low-Income Households Pay for Heat, AP News (Apr. 15, 2025), <https://apnews.com/article/91e466c458ac804b098be00867a92106>.

prone to heat waves.<sup>6</sup> This places the most vulnerable at risk. 50 percent of the heat-related deaths are among Black/African American people, even though they make up only 25 percent of New York City's population.<sup>78</sup>

### **Congressional Leadership Is Needed Now**

To meet the moment, we ask the Subcommittee to appropriate the full \$5.1 billion previously authorized under the Energy Policy Act of 2005, 42 U.S.C. § 8621.<sup>9</sup> This should be paired with supplemental emergency funding of at least \$2 billion, as was done in FY23.<sup>10</sup> Fully funding LIHEAP will allow local administrators to expand access, scale up weatherization, and prepare for worsening climate conditions that disproportionately affect low-income and environmental justice communities. Furthermore, we demand assurances that the LIHEAP program will be fully staffed within the Department of Health and Human Services, to ensure the capacity to fully implement the Congressionally appropriated funds for this life-saving program.

Recent polling data from Data for Progress shows that the vast majority (75 percent) of Americans support LIHEAP.<sup>11</sup> WE ACT for Environmental Justice's own polling has similarly revealed that 74 percent of voters nationwide have bipartisan support for the program, with 92% of surveyed Democrats and 56 percent of Republicans indicating support.<sup>12</sup> This is not just a matter of budgeting—it is a matter of equity, health, and human dignity. We thank you for your leadership and urge you to ensure that every American, regardless of income or zip code, can live in a home safe from climate extremes.

Sincerely,

#### Environmental Justice Organizations

350Hawaii

Alternatives for Community & Environment (ACE)

CEED

Chispa, a program of LCV

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<sup>6</sup> Lin, Anthony, and Brian A. Colle. "Long-Term Trends in Heat Wave Gaps for the New York City Metropolitan Area." *Urban Climate*, vol. 59, 24 Dec. 2024, p. 102247, [www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S2212095524004449](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.uclim.2024.102247), <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.uclim.2024.102247>.

<sup>7</sup> Heat-Related Deaths in New York City, 2013 Data Tables, <https://www.nyc.gov/assets/doh/downloads/pdf/epi/datatable47.pdf>.

<sup>8</sup> United States Census Bureau. "QuickFacts: New York City, New York." Census Bureau QuickFacts, United States Census Bureau, 2021, [www.census.gov/quickfacts/newyorkcitynewyork](https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/newyorkcitynewyork).

<sup>9</sup> Energy Policy Act of 2005, Pub. L. No. 109-58, 119 Stat. 594 (codified as amended at 42 U.S.C. § 8621).

<sup>10</sup> LIHEAP and WAP Funding | the LIHEAP Clearinghouse." [Liheapch.acf.hhs.gov](https://liheapch.acf.hhs.gov/Funding/funding.htm), [liheapch.acf.hhs.gov/Funding/funding.htm](https://liheapch.acf.hhs.gov/Funding/funding.htm).

<sup>11</sup> Data for Progress, 28 Apr. 2025, [www.dataforprogress.org/datasets/polling-on-liheap](https://www.dataforprogress.org/datasets/polling-on-liheap). Accessed 6 May 2025.

<sup>12</sup> Embold Research and WE ACT for Environmental Justice (2025), WE ACT Healthy Homes Survey [https://static1.squarespace.com/static/66b25a67d694ff578ea46977/t/681bbab8f3f2343441eb74fb/1746647740097/WE+ACT+\\_+Healthy+Homes+First+Polling+Presentation+%26+Report+\\_+May+2025.pdf](https://static1.squarespace.com/static/66b25a67d694ff578ea46977/t/681bbab8f3f2343441eb74fb/1746647740097/WE+ACT+_+Healthy+Homes+First+Polling+Presentation+%26+Report+_+May+2025.pdf)

Climate Justice Alliance  
Deep South Center for Environmental Justice  
Earth Ethics, Inc.  
EcoMadres  
Environmental Justice Health Alliance for Chemical Policy Reform (EJHA)  
Extinction Rebellion Houston  
GreenLatinos  
JPAP  
Just Transition Northwest Indiana  
Los Jardines Insite  
Micah Six Eight Mission  
New Energy Economy  
New Jersey Environmental Justice Alliance  
North Carolina Environmental Justice Network  
Pennsylvania Interfaith Power & Light  
Pitt Co. Coalition Against Racism (CAR)  
SEE (Social Eco Education)  
South Bronx Unite  
Sowing Justice  
WE ACT for Environmental Justice  
West End Revitalization Association (WERA)  
Western Nebraska Resources Council

#### Allied Organizations

198 methods  
350 Bay Area Action  
350 Wisconsin  
350.org  
AKPIRG  
Between the Waters  
Breach Collective  
Catalyst Miami  
Center for Biological Diversity  
Clean Water Action  
Climate Action Campaign  
Concerned Health Professionals of Pennsylvania  
Earthjustice  
EDF Action  
Elevate Energy  
Evergreen Action

Friends of the Earth US  
Greater Frenchtown Revitalization Council/Tallahassee Food Network  
Green Map System  
Green New Deal Network  
Health Care Without Harm  
Healthy Climate Wisconsin  
Hilltown Vision  
Institute for Policy Studies Climate Policy Program  
Jewish Climate Action Network NYC  
League of Conservation Voters  
Long Beach Alliance for Clean Energy  
Media Alliance  
Memphis APRI  
Natural Resources Defense Council  
Nia Impact Capital  
People's Action Institute  
Physicians for Social Responsibility  
Portland Raging Grannies  
Putnam Progressives  
Sierra Club  
The Enviro Show  
Third Act Texas  
Union of Concerned Scientists  
Unitarian Universalists for a Just Economic Community

CC: Chair Susan Collins, Vice Chair Patty Murray, Chair Tom Cole, Ranking Member Rosa DeLauro, Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer, House Minority Leader Hakeem Jeffries