

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

April 4, 2025

The Honorable Robert F. Kennedy, Jr.
Secretary
Department of Health and Human Services
200 Independence Avenue, S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20201

Dear Secretary Kennedy,

The Department of Health and Human Service's decision to close the Division of Energy Assistance (DEA) and terminate its employees is unacceptable. These arbitrary firings will threaten the continued existence of the Low-Income Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP), which is a lifeline for more than 26,000 Vermonters and 6.2 million Americans across the country.¹ The Administration must reinstate DEA staff immediately and continue to disburse Congressionally-appropriated LIHEAP funding to states so that thousands of Vermonters and millions of Americans are not forced to make the unacceptable choice between putting food on the table, paying for prescription drugs, or heating their homes in the winter.

As energy prices have increased across the country, LIHEAP has seen record utilizations in recent years.² In Vermont, approximately 23% of households report that they were unable to pay their energy bills in full, with tariffs on Canadian energy products threatening to drive utility bills even higher.³ Vermont receives around \$20 million in LIHEAP funding per year that provides energy assistance to more than 26,000 households. For children and seniors, for individuals with medical devices, and for working families, LIHEAP is a lifesaving service during the long winter heating months and hot summers.

The administration has a responsibility to disburse LIHEAP funds to states and ensure the program lives up to its promise to help families keep the heat on. Failure constitutes an illegal impoundment of bipartisan, congressionally-appropriated funds and will put millions of households across the country at risk of energy insecurity. You must immediately reinstate DEA staff so they can continue the urgent work of administering LIHEAP and providing critical assistance to American families. Being able to heat your home is not a luxury. It is a matter of life and death.

Sincerely,



Peter Welch
United States Senator



Bernard Sanders
United States Senator



Becca Balint
United States Representative

¹ LIHEAP assistance may be used to purchase home heating fuels, weatherize and repair homes, pay for cooling costs, or make emergency payments to keep utility services online, among other things.

² National Energy Assistance Directors Association, *Press Release: Winter Heating Price Outlook Home Heating Expenditures Projected to Increase by 10.5% States Call on Congress to Increase Funding for Energy Assistance* (October 1, 2024) (Online at <https://neada.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/10/presswinterenergy24-25.pdf>)

³ https://www.census.gov/data-tools/demo/hhp/#/?measures=ENERGYBILL&s_state=00050