

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

May 28, 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,

We write to you again regarding the Department of Health and Human Service's decision to close the Division of Energy Assistance, which operates the Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP), and to terminate its employees. We wrote to you as a delegation on April 4, 2025, expressing our deep concern with this decision and our support for LIHEAP. We have yet to receive a reply.¹

Instead, President Trump's Fiscal Year 2026 budget proposes to eliminate LIHEAP altogether, at a time when energy prices are up, and the program is seeing record utilization.²

The President has described LIHEAP as "unnecessary" and has suggested shifting the burden of this program to states.³ However, states are under increasing pressure to balance their budgets and will have to prioritize which social services they continue to provide in the absence of federal funding. Given the Trump Administration's continued cuts to safety net programs, states could face budget shortfalls if they are responsible for shouldering the full cost of LIHEAP.

LIHEAP is a lifeline to more than 26,000 Vermonters and 6.2 million Americans nationwide.⁴ In 2024, approximately 23% of Vermont households reported being unable to pay their energy bills in full.⁵ The State of Vermont receives approximately \$20 million in LIHEAP funding per year.⁶

¹ Letter from Sen. Peter Welch, Sen. Bernie Sanders, and Rep. Becca Balint to Secretary Kennedy, Department of Health and Human Services (April 4, 2025). (online at <https://www.welch.senate.gov/wp-content/uploads/2025/04/Vermont-Delegation-LIHEAP-04042025.pdf>).

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 E&E News by Politico, *Trump targets LIHEAP as more people use it to stay cool*, (May 5, 2025) (online at <https://www.eenews.net/articles/trump-targets-liheap-as-more-people-use-it-to-stay-cool/>).

⁴ 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.

⁵ U.S. Census Bureau, *Unable to Pay Energy Bill (Vermont)*, (August 20-September 16, 2024) (online at https://www.census.gov/data-tools/demo/hhp/#/?measures=ENERGYBILL&s_state=00050).

⁶ Vermont Business Magazine, *Vermont will receive more than \$20 million in federal funds for heating*, (November 1, 2024) (online at <https://vermontbiz.com/news/2024/november/01/vermont-will-receive-more-20-million-federal-funds-heating>).

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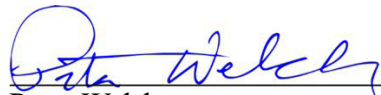
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The administration has a legal responsibility to disburse current LIHEAP funding to states. We appreciate that all funding for fiscal year 2025 continue to be disbursed. However, we remain concerned about the future of LIHEAP under these circumstances.

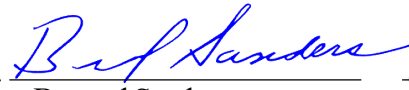
In light of your decision to terminate Division of Energy Assistance employees and President Trump's budget proposal to eliminate LIHEAP, we respectfully request a staff briefing and answers to the following questions by June 18, 2025:

- 1) Which division within the Department of Health and Human Services is currently administering this program? How many FTE staff are working on administering the funding?
- 2) Does the Department of Health and Human Services intend to operate LIHEAP going forward?
 - a. If not, does the Department expect states to operate the program?
 - b. If states are expected to operate the program, will the Department provide resources to transition the administration to state agencies?

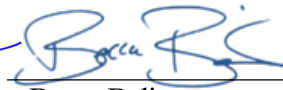
Sincerely,



Peter Welch
United States Senator



Bernard Sanders
United States Senator



Becca Balint
United States Representative