Dear Speaker Pelosi and Majority Leader McConnell,

We are writing regarding discussions surrounding a 4th COVID supplemental appropriations bill. As you know, the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) is a vital lifeline to families. We ask for as much funding as possible, but no less than the House-passed $1.5 billion for LIHEAP in the HEROES Act. Importantly, we also urge any final bill adopt the House-passed language regarding the split of funding among the new and old formulas. The House bill splits funding equally between the two formulas, ensuring no state is unfairly disadvantaged by funding allocation as a result.

Adequate LIHEAP funding is critical as we continue to combat the effect of COVID-19. This program supports low income families of all sizes and ages, including those with young children, the elderly, and individuals with disabilities. With many states and jurisdictions enforcing social distancing measures and encouraging people stay home, especially those in quarantine protocol, home heating and cooling is directly tied to the health and safety of families. With much of the U.S. currently facing historic heat, and the likelihood COVID-19 will continue well into the fall and winter seasons, leaving families in extreme heat or cold will only exacerbate outstanding critical health problems. Further, lack of adequate funding will force families to choose between paying their energy bill or other priorities like putting food on the table.

The use of funding formulas has unfortunately impacted some states in significant ways. As a result, prior appropriations bills have included hold harmless language to ensure the allocation of funds pursuant to the different formulas does not unfairly harm any single state. Using the even split language between the new and old formulas that was included in the House-passed HEROES Act would ensure that no state sees any detriment when it comes to funding allocation.

Money that has already been provided for LIHEAP has proven to be essential. In Massachusetts, families facing financial hardship are protected by current moratoria preventing utility termination. However, this summer alone, the Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) has seen 400 percent more inquiries for LIHEAP assistance compared to last summer. Any reduction in funding, including as a result of reallocating based on the funding formulas, will greatly impact the ability for a family to remain safely in their home.

We appreciate your attention to this matter.
Sincerely,

Joseph P. Kennedy, III
Member of Congress

Katherine M. Clark
Member of Congress