

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-4705

November 19, 2011

The Honorable Tom Harkin, Chairman
The Honorable Richard Shelby, Ranking Member
Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services,
Education and Related Agencies
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Harkin and Ranking Member Shelby:

I write to urge your support for the Senate's funding plan for the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP), which would provide critical home energy assistance for 41,000 additional low income households in Washington State relative to the House plan. As Washingtonians continue to face some of the most challenging economic times in decades, we should not be cutting holes in this critical safety net upon which many seniors and low-income families rely.

Although the funding levels are similar in both the House and Senate plans, the Senate's plan, which continues a decades-old precedent, allocates LIHEAP funds to the states more appropriately and equitably than the misguided proposal favored by the U.S. House of Representatives. Under the House plan, Washington State would face a roughly 40 percent cut in LIHEAP funds relative to the Senate's plan, a devastating and potentially life threatening result, especially during brutal cold periods.

Low-income families spend a higher proportion of their income on energy, especially during times of extreme temperatures and increasing energy prices. While home energy prices would be challenging under the best of times, elevated levels of unemployment across my state will make this year's heating season an even more difficult struggle. In light of these circumstances, I respectfully urge your support of the Senate's plan for allocating LIHEAP funds so my constituents will not be forced to choose among food, medicine, and heating their homes.

EVERETT
2930 WETMORE AVENUE
SUITE 9B
EVERETT, WA 98201
(425) 303-0114
FAX: (425) 303-8351

RICHLAND
825 JADWIN AVENUE
SUITE 204/204A
RICHLAND, WA 99352
(509) 946-8106
FAX: (509) 946-6937

SEATTLE
JACKSON FEDERAL BUILDING
915 2ND AVENUE, SUITE 3206
SEATTLE, WA 98174-1003
(206) 220-6400
TOLL FREE: 1-888-648-7328
FAX: (206) 220-6404

SPOKANE
U.S. FEDERAL COURTHOUSE
WEST 920 RIVERSIDE, SUITE 697
SPOKANE, WA 99201
(509) 353-2507
FAX: (509) 353-2547

TACOMA
950 PACIFIC AVENUE
SUITE 615
TACOMA, WA 98402
(253) 572-2281
FAX: (253) 572-5879

VANCOUVER
MARSHALL HOUSE
1313 OFFICERS' ROW
FIRST FLOOR
VANCOUVER, WA 98661
(360) 696-7838
FAX: (360) 696-7844

WASHINGTON, DC
311 HART SENATE OFFICE BUILDING
WASHINGTON, DC 20510-4705
(202) 224-3441
FAX: (202) 228-0514

I thank you for your commitment to helping low-income families manage this tough economic climate and your attention to my concerns and those of my constituents. I look forward to working together to address this serious issue in a fiscally responsible way.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Maria Cantwell". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Maria Cantwell