

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

September 10, 2008

President George W. Bush
The White House
Washington, D.C.

Dear President Bush,

As members of Congress from New England, we write you today to urge the immediate release of \$120 million in remaining contingency funds for the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP), to help cushion the impact of rising home heating oil costs on many of our most vulnerable constituents. With home heating oil prices in New England this winter expected to have risen by an average of nearly \$2 a gallon over last year, many families simply will be unable to afford to heat their homes. Of the more than 8.5 million American households that use home heating oil, 2.5 million of them – nearly 30 percent – are located in the six New England states alone.

Currently, \$100 million remains in unexpended LIHEAP contingency funds for Fiscal Year 2008, as well as an additional \$20 million in non-expiring funds from Fiscal Year 2005. The release of these remaining funds will help cushion the impact of out-of-control home heating prices on vulnerable poor, elderly, and disabled populations, whose fixed incomes cannot keep pace with the increasing cost of heating their homes. Indeed, these skyrocketing energy prices are already forcing working families to make difficult sacrifices. The National Energy Assistance Directors' Association (NEADA) reported earlier this summer that more than 15 million households nationwide are currently facing utility shutoffs because they simply cannot afford to pay their energy bills, an increase of nearly 15 percent from a year ago.

Releasing LIHEAP contingency funds before the winter arrives is an approach that has effectively mitigated the problem of high energy prices in past years. A release of funds now could allow families to secure heating oil for the coming season before prices climb even higher. Most recently, on September 12, 2006, you released \$79.96 million in emergency LIHEAP funds to 14 states, including all six New England states. That disbursement was targeted to those states that had experienced the coldest wintertime temperatures and where 15 percent or more of low-income households relied on home heating oil. At the time, Secretary Leavitt said, "This assistance will help states prepare for heating costs this fall and winter. With this funding, the Bush Administration is helping those in need by ensuring their homes are kept warm during the winter months." Since that time, the need for home heating assistance has only increased.

Because of funding limitations, only 16 percent of households eligible for LIHEAP actually receive any assistance. With the alarming spike in heating oil costs, demand is

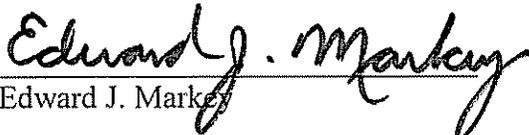
likely to grow significantly this coming winter. While we need to pursue a variety of long-term solutions to stabilize the cost of heating oil and to better conserve energy, the release of these remaining emergency LIHEAP funds for FY 2008 will provide an important source of short-term relief for struggling American families.

Thank you for your attention to this issue of profound importance.

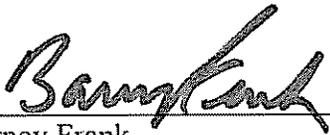
Sincerely,



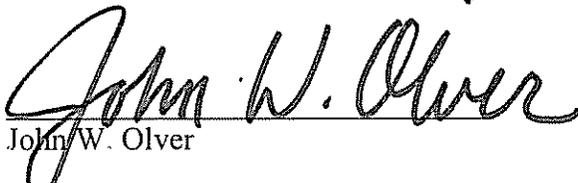
Christopher S. Murphy



Edward J. Markey



Barney Frank



John W. Olver



Rosa L. DeLauro



William D. Delahunt



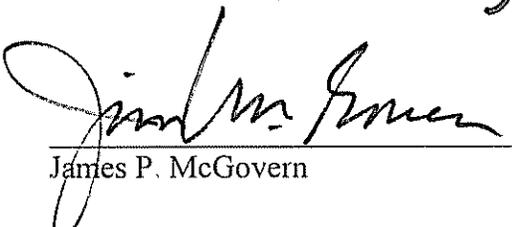
Thomas H. Allen



Patrick J. Kennedy



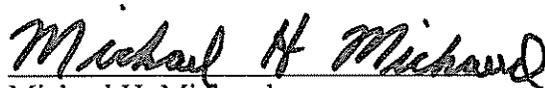
Richard E. Neal



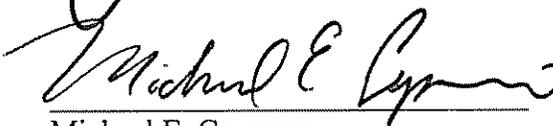
James P. McGovern



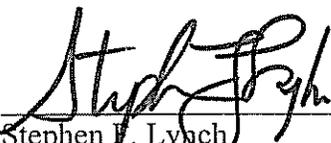
John B. Larson



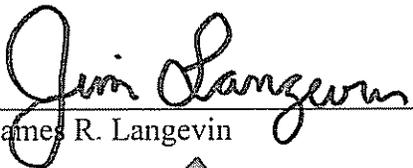
Michael H. Michaud

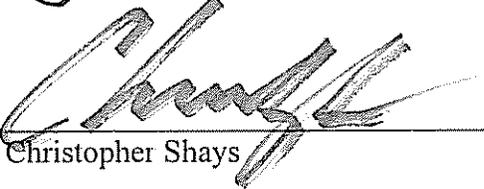


Michael E. Capuano



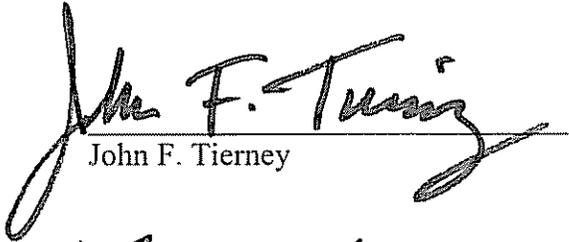
Stephen J. Lynch


James R. Langevin


Christopher Shays


Paul W. Hodes


Peter Welch


John F. Tierney


Niki Tsongas


Carol Shea-Porter


Joe Courtney

cc: Secretary Mike Leavitt, Department of Health and Human Services