

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

February 28, 2020

The Honorable Richard Shelby
Chairman
Committee on Appropriations
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Patrick Leahy
Vice Chairman
Committee on Appropriations
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Shelby and Vice Chairman Leahy:

As your Committee considers President Trump's request for emergency funding to address the spread of COVID-19, or coronavirus, in the United States, we strongly urge you to reject any proposal that would shift funding previously allocated by Congress away from vital programs provided by the Department of Health and Human Services, including the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP), which assists low-income Americans who would otherwise struggle to pay their heating bills.

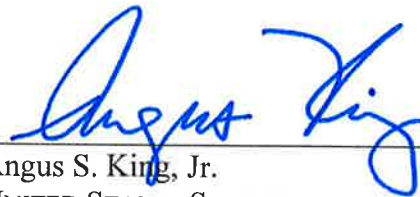
The Administration's \$37 million request from LIHEAP is a significant piece of this critical program – in fact, it is roughly the same amount of money Maine receives to help heat 30,000 households during our notoriously harsh winters. The program supports some of our state's most vulnerable citizens, as eighty percent of Maine homes that utilize LIHEAP funding include at least one person who is elderly, disabled, or a child under the age of six. This is a lifeline for citizens across our state, which has some of the highest energy costs in the country. Without LIHEAP, Maine people in need would be forced to choose between heating their home, putting food on the table, or purchasing necessary medications. None of these options is acceptable, and we shouldn't force this impossible choice on anyone.

We agree that our government needs a plan and significant funding to adequately prepare the United States to defend itself against the coronavirus and care for those who may be affected. However, the way to address an outbreak isn't to leave our most vulnerable citizens in the cold by using the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program as a piggybank.

Sincerely,



Susan M. Collins
UNITED STATES SENATOR



Angus S. King, Jr.
UNITED STATES SENATOR