

Legislation Text

File #: 160922, **Version:** 0

Urging the United States' Congressional Appropriations Committees to increase funding for LIHEAP in FY2017.

WHEREAS, The Low Income Home Energy Assistance program (LIHEAP), established in 1981 as part of the Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act, is a program through which the federal government makes annual grants to states, tribes, and territories to operate home energy assistance programs for low-income households; and

WHEREAS, LIHEAP assists eligible low-income households with their heating and cooling energy costs, bill payment assistance, energy crisis assistance, weatherization, and energy-related home repairs; and

WHEREAS, LIHEAP is an efficient, effective program that helps the nations' most vulnerable citizens, including the elderly; many of whom are on fixed incomes; the unemployed, families with young children, and the disabled; and

WHEREAS, LIHEAP is not an entitlement program and does not receive increased funding as need increases. Congress must appropriate funding annually. While states set eligibility guidelines, the LIHEAP statute establishes federal eligibility for households with incomes at or below 150% of poverty or 60% of state median income; and

WHEREAS, In FY2016, 150% of the federal poverty guideline for a family of three is \$30,035. The National Energy and Utility Affordability Coalition (NEUAC) reported that most LIHEAP recipients fall below the maximum thresholds and many LIHEAP-eligible households fail to receive any assistance because of insufficient funds; and

WHEREAS, In FY2015, 72% of the 6.8 million households receiving LIHEAP assistance had at least one member of their family who were either elderly, disabled, or had a child under the age of five; and

WHEREAS, The United States Census data of 2014 held that 46.7 million Americans lived in poverty; and

WHEREAS, In 2011, a study conducted by the National Energy Assistance Directors' Association found that 20 percent of LIHEAP households (1.78 million) contain veterans; and

WHEREAS, In FY2009, the United States Department of Health and Human Service (HHS) estimated that 35 million households were eligible for LIHEAP under the federal statutory guidelines. Accordingly, HHS estimated that 7.4 million households received heating or winter crisis assistance, and approximately 900,000 households received cooling assistance in FY2009; and

WHEREAS, According to the NEUAC, between FY2009 and FY2016 LIHEAP's appropriation was cut by more than one-third. Due to these cuts, states have been forced to reduce the number of households served, cut benefits, or both; and

WHEREAS, An appropriation of at least \$4.7 billion is not enough to meet the full needs of vulnerable households, the program is much more effective at higher funding levels, and LIHEAP truly becomes a national program serving at-risk households in all regions of the country; and

WHEREAS, Sufficiently funded, LIHEAP serves a vital, life-saving role protecting millions of families from America's cold winters and hot summers; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, BY THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA, That Council does hereby urge the United States' Congressional Appropriations Committees to increase funding for LIHEAP in FY2017.