

March 15, 2019

The Honorable Alex M. Azar II
Secretary
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
200 Independence Avenue, S.W.
Washington, DC 20201

Re: Transfer of Remaining FY2019 LIHEAP Funds

Dear Secretary Azar,

On behalf of our LIHEAP-eligible low-income clients, the National Consumer Law Center urges you to reconsider your decision to reallocate \$37 million in remaining FY 2019 LIHEAP funding away from much needed low-income energy assistance. The National Consumer Law Center is a non-profit organization that works for economic justice for low-income and other disadvantaged people in the U.S. through policy analysis and advocacy, publications, litigation, and training.

LIHEAP is safety-net program that saves lives and protects the health and safety of low-income households by helping families pay their home energy bills. This has been a particularly challenging winter for many families as the polar vortex increased the heating bills for low-income families and the spring is when cold-weather winter shut-off moratoria are lifted. The National Energy Assistance Directors' Association's survey of low-income LIHEAP recipients found that a third of those households received shut-off notices before receiving their LIHEAP assistance. Energy bills make up around 12 percent of a low-income households budget and the consequences of this energy poverty are dire, such as making decisions between food, medicine and other basic necessities. LIHEAP is targeted to help the most vulnerable low-income households, those with elderly and or very young children or individuals with disabilities who are at risk from severe health complications, including death, from frigid winters or sweltering summers.

NCLC, on behalf of its low-income clients, urges you to release the remaining \$37 million in FY 2019 LIHEAP appropriations to the states LIHEAP program to protect the health and safety of our country's most vulnerable families.

Sincerely,



Olivia Wein
Staff Attorney
National Consumer Law Center