



March 22, 2017

Honorable Ken Helm, Chair
House Committee on Energy & Environment
900 Court St. NE
Salem, OR 97301

RE: HB 2134 – Oregon Energy Assistance Program

Chair Helm and Members of the Committee:

Please find below an advocacy letter that Portland General Energy and Pacific Power have signed to support funding for the federal Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP). Our customers currently have access to both LIHEAP and Oregon Energy Assistance Plan funds if they meet certain eligibility requirements. The federal budget proposed by President Trump would cut funding to LIHEAP, which would significantly decrease assistance options for low-income Oregonians. Nearly 500 entities nationwide have signed onto this letter organized by the National Energy & Utility Affordability Coalition. You can find the online letter and see who has signed on here: <http://neuac.org/advocacy/2018-all-parties-letter/>

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Annette Price

Varner Seaman

An Open Letter to Congressional Appropriations Committees in Support of the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program

Dear House and Senate Appropriators:

We are writing in support of the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP). We urge you to make LIHEAP a top priority as you draft the FY2018 Labor-HHS-Education Appropriations Bill. Sufficiently funded, LIHEAP serves a vital, life-saving role protecting millions of families from America's cold winters and hot summers. Strong LIHEAP funding is

necessary if this program is to continue to allow states and their charitable partners to serve America's most vulnerable households.

LIHEAP is an efficient, effective program. It helps your most vulnerable constituents, including the elderly, the unemployed, families with young children, and the disabled. A large number of LIHEAP recipients are veterans. In FY 2015, 72% of the 6.8 million households receiving LIHEAP assistance had at least one member who was either elderly, disabled, or had a child under the age of five.

LIHEAP is not an entitlement and does not receive increased funding as need increases. Congress must appropriate funding annually. While states set eligibility guidelines, federal statute sets the income maximum at 150 percent of the federal poverty guideline or 60 percent of the state's median income. (For FY2017, 150% of the federal poverty guideline for a family of three is \$30,240, [see source](#).) Most LIHEAP recipients fall well below the maximum thresholds and many LIHEAP-eligible households fail to receive any assistance because of insufficient funds.

In 2015, the national poverty rate was 13.5 percent and 43.1 million Americans lived in poverty, according to U.S. [Census data](#). There's no question that the need for a program like LIHEAP persists. A 2016 [study from the Federal Reserve](#), found that nearly half of American families would struggle to pay for an emergency expense costing \$400. LIHEAP frequently meets those exact short-term emergencies and is the difference between making ends meet or not.

Between FY2009 and FY2016, LIHEAP's appropriation was cut by more than one-third. We know that Congress has made and will continue to make difficult budget decisions – but reducing LIHEAP funding is not the answer. We strongly urge you to support increased LIHEAP funding in FY2018.