

COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS  
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## **PRESS RELEASE**

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### **STATE LAWMAKERS CALL FOR HEATING ASSISTANCE TO SUPPORT LOW INCOME FAMILIES AS FEDERAL FUNDS FLAG**

**Boston**— Senator Anne M. Gobi (D-Spencer) and fellow state lawmakers today reached out to Governor Charlie Baker to assist state residents at risk of getting the cold shoulder from a federal funding shortfall in the low-income heating assistance program known as LIHEAP which serves 160,000 households in the state.

More than 70 House and Senate members joined in requesting a \$30 million appropriation meant to shore up shortages in heating fuel access. They say that most of the nearly 48,000 supported oil heat households have exhausted their fuel assistance benefit and all will have exhausted it by the end of January, leaving them in a perilous position for the rest of the winter.

The Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) provides eligible households with help in paying a portion of winter heating bills. Eligibility, based on household size and the annual income of every adult household member, provides assistance for electric and gas utility bills and other heat sources including oil and propane.

“This funding is critical to provide heat to our most vulnerable families,” remarked Senator Gobi. “Winter can be the cruelest season, but a commitment for funding could ease of of the uncertainty and struggle.”

Lawmakers have connected with the Massachusetts Association for Community Action (MASSCAP), Massachusetts AARP, and the leaders of dozens of non-profit human service and advocacy organizations across the state to respond to the growing need.

“Prolonged bitterly cold weather and rising heating oil prices have combined to make staying warm this winter a nightmare for tens of thousands of vulnerable households who heat with oil,” **said MASSCAP’s Executive Director Joe Diamond.** “Particularly at risk are children, seniors, and veterans across the Commonwealth. This is all made worse by the fact that Massachusetts is faced with a cut of \$11 million in its federal fuel assistance allocation this year.”

The fuel assistance program administered by the state Department of Housing and Community Development and carried out by community action agencies and other community groups has had a an increase in applicants of over 20 percent from last year.

The lawmakers, hopeful for a swift resolution, note that there has been significant cooperation between the branches over the past three decades in responding to limited federal funding and extreme winter weather conditions

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