



Contact:

Lisa Clay  
Director of Communications and Members Services,  
MASSCAP  
774 573 3319 or [lisaclay@masscap.org](mailto:lisaclay@masscap.org)

Joe Diamond,  
Executive Director, MASSCAP  
617 645 2949 or [joediamond@masscap.org](mailto:joediamond@masscap.org)

## **Households Continue to Struggle to Heat Their Homes**

### ***Thousands of Households Have Run Out of Home Heating Oil***

**Boston, MA, January 30, 2019** – With bitter temperatures gripping the nation including New England, there is serious concern for the health and well-being of low-income households – especially those that heat with oil.

“Thousands of home heating oil households that we serve with fuel assistance have run out of the benefit,” pointed out Joe Diamond, MASSCAP Executive Director. He also noted that MASSCAP joins more than half of the members of the state legislature in urging the Governor to include \$30 million in his upcoming FY19 supplemental budget request.

Over the past three weeks, more than 100 Representatives and Senators added their name to letters to the Governor in support of the funding request. Senator Michael J. Rodrigues pointed, “We have to act now in order to protect the most vulnerable members of our community. This money isn't going to mean much in May or June, so it's critical that we do this as soon as possible.”

“Keeping warm in the winter is an essential part of life in New England, and it's important to the health and safety of many residents who would be vulnerable without this type of assistance,” said Senate Minority Leader Bruce Tarr. “Seniors, veterans, families with children and others are counting on our Commonwealth to provide the home heating support they need, particularly in light of the federal reductions.”

The letter from the House of Representatives, led by Representative Golden, notes: “A commitment of \$30 million would ensure that the individuals faced with these precarious circumstances are able to pay their bills for the remaining winter months and avoid the terrible dilemma of having to choose between heats, food, or medicine, or turn to unsafe heating methods such as improper use of space heaters, ovens, and fireplaces. With the bitterly cold weather only expected to intensify in the coming weeks and months, now is the time to provide a safety net for these vulnerable groups and prevent a public health and safety crisis.”

At close to \$3 per gallon for heating oil, the current federally-funded fuel assistance benefit will allow oil heat households to cover the cost of 1 and 3/4 tanks of oil. On average, a typical household uses 3-4 tanks of heating oil to get through cold and snowy New England winters. Most of the oil heat households who have accessed the fuel assistance benefit have exhausted it already.

“The recently ended federal government shutdown sheds important light on how vulnerable people living with low incomes are to the kind of disruption that a crisis or an interruption of income can bring,” Diamond said.

“Thousands of working individuals and families across Massachusetts and millions across the country live paycheck to paycheck. Fuel assistance can help bring stability and economic mobility to the lives of the people we serve.”

We continue to urge Governor Charlie Baker and members of the Massachusetts legislature to include \$30 million for the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) in the next FY 19 Supplemental Budget. The severe weather with more to come along with the cut of \$11 million in the MA federal fuel assistance allocation this year makes the need for assistance literally a matter of life and death.

The Massachusetts Association of Community Action’s 23 private, non-profit human service and advocacy organizations work to administer key anti-poverty programs in every city and town in the Commonwealth. These organizations serve over 600,000 low-income people annually, more than half of them with incomes below 125% of the federal poverty level. Those interested in learning more about fuel assistance can visit MASSCAP’s website on the LIHEAP program, [heatinghelpma.org](http://heatinghelpma.org), where information on eligibility and the agency serving their community can be found.

For more than 50 years, Community Action Agencies have been on the front lines of addressing poverty -- administering federal programs, federal community services and community development grants, and state funds. CAAs are economic engines in cities and towns across Massachusetts, providing communities with an annual infusion of over \$500 million in total resources. CAAs generate at least twice that amount helping clients become self-sufficient and productive.

//End