



Urgent Need for State Allocation for Fuel Assistance

We appreciate the Governor's FY19 supplemental budget allowing for \$11M for Fuel Assistance. However, the original request - \$30M – is needed to help thousands of vulnerable households cover heating cost in the face of frigid temperatures and more winter to come.

THE ASK

- \$30M in state funding will meet the immediate need of oil heat customers, most of which have exhausted their benefit already, allowing an additional 100 gallon delivery.
- It will also allow for protection for gas and electric customers against potential termination following the moratorium (April 1, 2019).
- More than half of the legislature signed letters to the Governor supporting the \$30M allocation

THE NEED

- The Federal resource has dropped from \$200 M to \$136M over the past several years.
 - Benefit is not sufficient for full winter, i.e. benefit provides for 1¾ tanks of oil - less than half of the 3-4 tanks needed to get through MA winters.
- Current reality: Prolonged bitterly cold weather to date and more winter to come! Since December oil prices are on the rise again.
- Oil heat households have already exhausted the benefit.

WITHOUT RESOURCES

- Families use dangerous alternative heating approaches such as space heaters, stoves and fireplaces
- Threat of fire danger and carbon monoxide poisoning
- Families forced to make household budget trade-offs that jeopardize children's health, including choosing heat over food or health care

BACKGROUND

- In past 12 years, the Governor & State Legislature have provided supplemental fuel assistance resources in response to limited federal funding and grave weather conditions
- We do not ask for state allocation every year, only when needed (no ask in FY16 and FY17 as conditions did not warrant)
- Federal program (LIHEAP) is set up to allow for new applicants throughout the heating season.
- Applications are up to date over last year at this time.

WHO

- MASSCAP is joined by a diverse coalition of organization in its support for a state fuel assistance line item including: the AARP, the Children's Health Watch at the Boston Medical Center, Massachusetts Energy Marketers Association (formerly the Massachusetts Oil Heat Council), the National Consumer Law Center, and Mass Home Care.
- The Fuel Assistance program is administered by state Department of Housing and Community Development and provided by a network of 22 community-based organizations including 20 Community Action Agencies, the City of Cambridge, and the New England Farm Workers Council.