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## **Advocates Urge Legislators to Build on Governor's Supplemental Fuel Assistance Allocation**

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

**Boston, MA, February 1, 2019** – Advocates have urged the Governor to provide \$30M in supplemental Fuel Assistance Resources to meet the immediate need of vulnerable households across the Commonwealth to stay safe and warm this winter. The Governor's FY19 supplemental budget allows for \$11M for additional Fuel Assistance resources. While this resource is very much appreciated, the original request of \$30M is necessary to help these thousands of vulnerable families, children, seniors and veterans cover heating costs in the face of frigid temperatures and more winter to come. With bitter temperatures gripping the nation including New England, there is serious concern for the health and well-being of low-income households.

The \$30M 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).

Over the past three weeks, more than 100 Representatives and Senators added their name to letters to the Governor in support of the \$30M funding request. "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.”

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.

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