Urgent Need for State Allocation for FY20 Fuel Assistance

THE ASK
- $15 M 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); close to 50,000 fuel assistance households incur electric or gas utility debt.

THE NEED
- The Federal resource has dropped from $200 M to $130 M over the past several years.
  - Benefit is not sufficient for full winter, i.e. benefit provides for $\frac{3}{4}$ tanks of oil - less than half of the 3-4 tanks needed to get through MA winters.
  - FY18 - $150 M Federal
  - FY19 - $155 M ($136 Federal and $19 M State)
  - FY20 - $141 M ($130 approx. Federal and $11 M State)
    - A $15 M state allocation would bring the FY20 allocation to $156 M, virtually equal to FY19
- Current reality: Winter in MA is always cold and snowy. Since December, oil prices are on the rise again.
- Many oil heat households have already exhausted the benefit.

WITHOUT RESOURCES
- Families use dangerous alternative heating approaches such as space heaters, stoves and fireplaces.
- There is increased 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.

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.