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October 18, 2011

Ms. Lynn M. Marinelli
Erie County Legislator
1701 Hertel Avenue
Buffalo, NY 14216

Dear Legislator Marinelli:

Thank you for contacting me to express concern about cuts to the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP). I agree that the LIHEAP program is essential for Western New York, particularly in these difficult economic times.

In 2009, Erie, Niagara, Orleans and Monroe counties provided this necessary funding to 81,450, 15,241, 2,719 and 39,671 beneficiaries, respectively. Cutting the Fiscal Year 2012 (FY12) LIHEAP budget will severely limit the ability of this program to reach families in need.

I have consistently opposed cuts to LIHEAP, as described below:

- On February 19, 2011, I opposed H.R. 1, the Full-Year Continuing Appropriations Act for 2011, which provided \$4.71 billion for LIHEAP (a \$390 million reduction from FY 10).
- On April 14, 2011, I opposed H.R. 1473, the FY 11 Department of Defense and Full-Year Continuing Appropriations Act, which also provided \$4.71 billion for LIHEAP.
- On April 29, 2011, I joined 90 colleagues in a letter to the House Appropriations Committee requesting that the FY 12 Labor, Health and Human Services Appropriations bill provide at least \$5.1 billion for LIHEAP.

Unfortunately, the House Appropriations Committee approved the Labor, Health and Human Services FY 12 Appropriations Bill with funding for LIHEAP at \$3.4 billion, which is \$1.3 billion below FY 11 levels. The Senate Appropriations Bill, which passed out of committee in September, funds LIHEAP at \$3.6 billion, a \$1.1 billion decrease.

At this time, both houses of Congress are working toward an omnibus spending bill, which means that these individual appropriations bills would not receive further debate on the floor. Because of the spending caps that were instituted in the debt ceiling deal, it is highly unlikely that any increase will be possible above the finalized spending bills. Particularly because the Senate and the House arrived at a similar amount, there seems to be little chance that the omnibus will reflect a different number. I will monitor the appropriations process as it moves forward. Rest assured that I will continue to fight for fully funding the LIHEAP program.

I understand the difficult position of the agencies who are working on the front lines with those most impacted by the economic situation. Please know that my office will continue to do everything we can to support those agencies and the people of Western New York.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Louise M. Slaughter". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Louise M. Slaughter
Member of Congress