

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

February 16, 2021

Ambassador Susan Rice
Assistant to the President for Domestic Policy
Domestic Policy Council
The White House

Dear Ambassador Rice:

An outbreak of dangerous Arctic temperatures across portions of the United States has led to dramatic increases in the price of wholesale natural gas and electricity. We write to request that you provide an update on the ongoing situation and work with the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) and other relevant agencies to take any necessary action to provide support for communities and public institutions that rely on natural gas for heat during this record-breaking cold weather.

Due to historic cold temperatures that have swept across the southern and central parts of the United States, increased energy demand paired with natural gas supply constraints are leading to natural gas prices that are 10 to 100 times higher than average. We are concerned that many Illinois residents and municipalities will experience massive increases in the cost of residential natural gas prices, and will be faced with unaffordable energy bills in March. These increased costs are especially concerning for families right now because many are already struggling due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Therefore, we also request that you consider providing supplemental funding to the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP)—a critical lifeline for low-income households, seniors, and veterans, to help with their energy bills. This would help ensure that households are not forced to choose between food and heat while battling the economic effects of this COVID-19 pandemic. Americans should not have worry about not being able to afford food and medicine due to unprecedented heating bills.

Thank you for your consideration of these urgent requests. We look forward to working with you to ensure these communities that rely on natural gas for heat remain safe and can find relief from an unaffordable heat bill.

Sincerely,



Richard J. Durbin
United States Senator



Tammy Duckworth
United States Senator