

David Gibson
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LD 3

Senate President Jackson, Speaker Talbot Ross, and members of the Committee on Appropriations and Financial Affairs:

This bill recognizes an urgent need in the community, but fails to address the root cause of the problem. While Maine families need assistance urgently, we need to be pragmatic and ensure that the solution actually addresses the problem. As drafted, this bill offers a temporary fix but doesn't solve the underlying problem. High energy costs are a complex and long-term quandary. They are caused by inefficient buildings, widespread dependence on fossil fuels, and the price volatility of global energy markets and international events.

I would strongly encourage you to allocate a portion of the funds towards K-12 energy education. Occupant behaviors can be a significant contributor to high energy bills. Most people don't know that turning down the thermostat 1 degree will reduce energy use (and costs) by 3-5 percent. Turning down the thermostat 5 degrees will save 15-25% on heating bills. Every student (and adult) should understand this fact, and other ways that they can reduce energy consumption. K-12 energy education is critical to have better informed energy consumers, and to develop future clean energy workers.

I am currently organizing a professional development workshop for 25 K-12 teachers in Maine next summer. This training will utilize award-winning energy efficiency curriculum developed by the non-profit Envirolution in Reno, Nevada. Teachers will be provided all of the materials to lead all the lessons in their classrooms. However, we are still seeking \$150,000 to bring this to fruition. It seems shocking that we would spend \$450 million on a one-time heating cost payment, but not 1/3,000th that amount to teach the next generation how to avoid these problems in the future.

Once this bill is passed, checks will be written, and it is gone forever. What happens if heating oil costs \$8/gallon next winter? I would also encourage you to make these funds available to Maine residents as a 0% interest loan. That will help people to avoid the immediate struggle, while maintaining the source of funding in the state for future emergencies as loans are repaid. With heating oil prices now in decline (down from \$5.71 to \$4.50/gallon), is this really the biggest emergency we'll face in the next decade, and best use for these one-time funds?

Thank you,

David Gibson, Morrill