

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-3205

September 17, 2026

The Honorable Robert Kennedy, Jr.
Secretary
United States Department of Health and Human Services
200 Independence Avenue, S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20201

Dear Secretary Kennedy,

Seven months into President Trump's disastrous war of choice in Iran, the United States has reached an inflection point. New Yorkers have had to endure months of rising costs for necessities, everything from gasoline to groceries. And last week, global markets crossed another grim milestone. Due to this administration's poor leadership, the price of crude oil once again rose to \$100 per barrel for the first time since July—up 40 percent since President Trump brought us into war.¹

New Yorkers are already feeling the pain at the pump, grocery store, and pharmacy. But the rising price of crude oil is particularly concerning at this time of year. As New York prepares for the cold fall and winter months, the inflated price of oil will push home heating costs to significant highs. As of September 14, the average cost of heating oil in New York is \$6.14 per gallon, which is a 66.0 percent increase from this time last year.² These costs will be felt most acutely by New York's seniors, who are already struggling to afford the necessities of life and who will see their budgets stretched even thinner due to the rising price of home heating oil.

Your Department is responsible for administering the Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP), the essential federal program that aids seniors and low-income households with their energy and heating bills. LIHEAP provides direct financial assistance to help these households afford their bills during the coldest months of the year. As costs continue to rise across the board, this program will be a vital lifeline to help New Yorkers make ends meet.

Earlier this month, Congress passed the *Continuing Appropriations and Extensions Act, 2027* into law.³ This law provides continuing funding for essential programs like LIHEAP, which has now been made available to the Department of Health and Human Services for

¹ [Oil Hits \\$100 a Barrel as Turmoil Intensifies in Middle East - The New York Times](#)

² <https://www.nyserda.ny.gov/Energy-Prices/Home-Heating-Oil/Average-Home-Heating-Oil-Prices>

³ [PL 119-103](#)

distribution. In light of the alarming rise in global oil prices prompted by this administration's war in Iran, I urge you to immediately release the LIHEAP funding provided under this law so that states like New York can prepare for the coming fall and winter months. Thank you for your attention to this urgent matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Kirsten Gillibrand". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Kirsten" and last name "Gillibrand" clearly distinguishable.

Kirsten Gillibrand
United States Senator