



June 15, 2020

The Honorable Lisa Murkowski
Chairman
Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources
304 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Joe Manchin
Ranking Member
Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources
304 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Murkowski and Ranking Member Manchin:

On behalf of the American Gas Association (AGA), we applaud your Committee's work to examine the impacts of COVID-19 on the energy industry. AGA understands that many Americans are currently facing unprecedented hardships; access to energy should not be an additional burden for vulnerable customers at this difficult time. All across the country we have been facing difficulties and challenges that no one could have envisioned due to the COVID-19 pandemic. During this unpredictable time, natural gas utilities have been a constant—ensuring reliable delivery of natural gas to the frontlines and the families who rely on it.

AGA member companies have demonstrated their unwavering commitment to provide essential, affordable and reliable energy to nearly 180 million Americans in their homes, to frontline facilities, and to businesses struggling to weather this crisis. During these unprecedented financial challenges, natural gas utilities have suspended disconnecting service and waived late fees. Households that use natural gas for heating, cooking, and clothes drying save an average of \$870 per year compared to homes using electricity for those applications. The industry is also supporting the communities in which they serve by donating personal protective equipment (PPE) to frontline workers and donating millions of dollars in aid to relief organizations.

As some states begin to open back up, the natural gas industry will continue to play an integral role in the economic recovery of this nation—helping to rebuild the communities they serve and providing the support that Americans need to get back on their feet. AGA companies have always had programs in place to help those experiencing financial distress. This pandemic has brought unparalleled economic hardship, and companies are working with customers to ensure they have the tools they need during this difficult time. AGA members are proactively communicating with customers about all available financial resources to help customers establish payment plans as early as possible to help lessen the burden.

AGA and our members have long supported the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP), a critical federal program to help vulnerable Americans by placing funding in the hands of those who need it most. Natural gas utilities successfully advocated for an additional \$900 million for LIHEAP in the first stimulus package, which, the National Energy Assistance Directors' Association (NEADA) estimates will serve 3 million households, including those currently receiving LIHEAP, and new households facing recent unemployment. Unfortunately, with more than 30 million Americans filing for unemployment in the last few months, this funding only scratches the surface of what families will need to stay afloat. The resulting increase in the low income population has increased the number of LIHEAP eligible households by 8.5 million—35.2 million to 43.8 million home eligible. According to NEADA data, an additional \$4.3 billion for LIHEAP is necessary to address that growing need, a funding level that has received bipartisan support in both the House and Senate.

Natural gas utilities are part of the communities they serve and the support they provide goes far beyond the energy they deliver—we are seeing that now more than ever. We appreciate the work your Committee has done for reliable energy access and to understand the impacts COVID-19 is having on the energy industry.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "K Harbert". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "K" and a stylized "Harbert".

Karen Harbert
President & CEO
American Gas Association