



Contact:

Joe Diamond  
Executive Director, MASSCAP  
617.645.2949 or [joediamond@masscap.org](mailto:joediamond@masscap.org)

Colleen Cullen  
Director, Grants Management and Compliance, MASSCAP  
617.735.5451 or [colleencullen@masscap.org](mailto:colleencullen@masscap.org)

## Middle East War Causes Home Heating Oil Prices to Surge

**A Gallon is Now as High as \$4.70, up 30 Percent from \$3.60 a Week Ago, and Rising**

**Community Action Agencies Appeal to the Governor and Legislature for an Immediate Fuel Assistance Supplemental Allocation of \$35 million**

**Boston, MA – March 9, 2026** – The war in the Middle East has caused the price of home heating oil to suddenly rise to as high as \$4.70 per gallon in some parts of the state and rising. This shines a light on **the perilous situation** that thousands of vulnerable children, elderly, veterans, and disabled are in as they exhaust the federal fuel assistance benefit they received in December.

“We are very concerned for the health and safety of the over 160,000 households we serve across the state, and especially for the over **30,000** who heat with oil **and who have exhausted all resources for another delivery** with no prospect of another fuel assistance benefit. This is a situation made urgent by the recent freezing weather and is now desperate for many of the people we serve,” said Joe Diamond, Massachusetts Association for Community Action (MASSCAP) Executive Director.

Due to the instability from the recent federal shutdown, the bitter cold weather, and rapidly rising energy prices sparked by the war in the middle east, the estimated \$159 million Massachusetts will receive this fiscal year from the federal program (Home Energy Assistance Program – HEAP) **will not cover the heating needs of vulnerable households for the entire winter.**

“**Our clients are desperate.** Close to 80 percent of our households that heat with oil are out of their oil or will be within a few days. Right now, we do not have the resources to help many of them. This is an unprecedented situation, and we are calling on our elected officials to help”, said Pam Kuechler, MASSCAP President and Executive Director of People Acting in Community Endeavors (PACE) in New Bedford. She added that the Community Action Agencies (CAAs) are grateful for the partnerships they have with elected officials and that elected officials have responded many times when the need was great.

Liz Berube, Executive Director of Citizens for Citizens (CFC) in Fall River, pointed out, “The Legislature and the Governor have helped us over the years when we have reached out. We do not reach out every year; only when conditions require it. Over the past 40 years, we have done so 20 times and almost every time the Legislature and the Governor have responded **positively to our requests**. We urgently hope they will do so again very soon!”

Specifically, \$35 million will provide oil heat households with approximately \$650 each, enough to access 130-140 gallons, just over the minimum amount most home heating oil companies will deliver. The average tank holds 275 gallons; at \$4.70 per gallon, \$650 buys 138 gallons or about half a tank. It is important to note that 100 gallons in New England lasts a household between 8-12 days **during cold temperatures**.

“While we are also very concerned about households that use electricity and natural gas, we also know that they are protected by the moratorium on shutoffs in effect until mid-April. Helping electric and gas households with any additional resources that become available after allocations to oil heat households are made, would limit overdue electric and gas bills and the danger of shutoffs after the moratorium ends,” Diamond added.

Fuel Assistance is a nearly universal program for CAAs in Massachusetts, serving over 150,000 households, and is essential to the wellbeing of the individuals served. It is a powerful economic support program while at the same time serves as a health and safety program, as well as a housing preservation program, and as part of a service integration approach, is a door to other services like Head Start.

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**About MASSCAP**

The Massachusetts Association of Community Action’s 23 private, non-profit human service and advocacy organizations work to administer key anti-poverty programs in every city and town in the Commonwealth. These organizations serve approximately 600,000 low-income people annually, more than half of them with incomes below 125% of the federal poverty level.

For 60 years, Community Action Agencies have been on the front lines of addressing poverty -- administering federal programs, federal community services and community development grants, and state funds. CAAs are economic engines in cities and towns across Massachusetts, providing communities with an annual infusion of over \$1.2 million in total resources. CAAs generate at least twice that amount, helping clients become economically stable and mobile.

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