



October 9, 2019

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi  
Speaker of the House  
United States House of Representatives  
U.S. Capitol Building  
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy  
Minority Leader  
United States House of Representatives  
U.S. Capitol Building  
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Mitch McConnell  
Majority Leader  
United States Senate  
U.S. Capitol Building, Room S-230  
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Chuck Schumer  
Minority Leader  
United States Senate  
U.S. Capitol Building, Room S-224  
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Speaker Pelosi, Minority Leader McCarthy, Majority Leader McConnell, and Minority Leader Schumer:

Our states are full of determined, tough people. For generations, our families have weathered brutal hurricanes, killer tornadoes, sustained flooding, and devastating forest fires. But recent history tells us there's a new normal when it comes to these natural disasters and if we don't rise to the challenge, they will get the best of us.

As these natural disasters continue to increase in frequency and devastation, we appreciate relief and recovery assistance from the federal government. However, there are critical reforms needed to ensure long-term disaster recovery programs function more efficiently.

Right now, long-term federal disaster recovery assistance, in the form of Community Development Block Grant - Disaster Recovery (CDBG-DR) funding controlled by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), gets passed by Congress and announced with great fanfare, but affected states are left to wait months – sometimes years - before HUD publishes the Federal Register. A Federal Register is only the first required step in a lengthy and bureaucratic approval process setting out how that money can be put into action.

CDBG-DR funds are routinely appropriated after natural disasters, but the program is unauthorized, meaning states must wait for new Federal Register guidelines after each round of funding is announced. There are currently over 60 Federal Register Notices on record for CDBG-DR, with grantees facing variable, overlapping and even contradictory details.

Many of us have met with the President, administration officials, and our Congressional representatives to push for changes. We need Congress to require HUD to publish program requirements in the Federal Register within a much shorter timeframe. Better yet, Congress could get the money to the people who need it even faster by formally authorizing the CDBG-DR program so that Federal Register instructions can be significantly standardized and expedited. Bipartisan legislation to do this has been introduced in both the House and the Senate, with a clear intent to balance speed-to-need and accountability for public resources. We ask that Congress pass it as quickly as possible.

Another critical reform would create a universal application for disaster survivors that would be shared among FEMA, HUD and the Small Business Administration so people busy with recovery only need to fill out one application. Combining this with seamless interagency data sharing would enable significantly better communication and coordination, as well as faster disbursement of funds and improved oversight and accountability.

We must all keep fighting for survivors recovering from these disasters, working to rebuild their lives and protect themselves from the next catastrophe. We owe it to them to deliver on our mission for stronger, smarter, more resilient communities.

Sincerely,



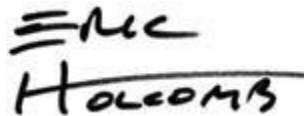
Governor Roy Cooper  
State of North Carolina



Governor Kay Ivey  
State of Alabama



Governor JB Pritzker  
State of Illinois



Governor Eric Holcomb  
State of Indiana



Governor Mike Parson  
State of Missouri



Governor Ralph Northam  
State of Virginia



Governor Tony Evers  
State of Wisconsin