



**STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA
OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR**

**JOSH STEIN
GOVERNOR**

January 13, 2026

North Carolina Congressional Delegation
United States Congress
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Members of North Carolina's Congressional Delegation,

It has been 16 months since Hurricane Helene tore through western North Carolina, upending life for millions, taking 108 lives, and damaging dozens of communities across an entire region to the tune of \$60 billion. Many citizens, volunteer groups, and elected officials have stepped up with incredible dedication to help rebuild. While incredible progress has been made, there's still much work to be done across the region which is home to an estimated 3.5 million people – more than 32% of the state's population. The state itself has committed more than \$3.1 billion to rebuild homes, repair infrastructure, and restart the region's economy. But these efforts and investments are not enough to surmount the nearly \$60 billion in damage Helene caused.

The federal government has partnered in our recovery efforts from the very beginning, and we are grateful for every dollar we have received. Still, current federal support is not enough. To date, North Carolina has been allocated \$7 billion in total federal funding for Helene recovery. Nearly \$2.9 billion has been obligated or disbursed to projects or directly to survivors through federal programs. Given the scale of the damage, this amount of federal support to date is simply not enough to help impacted communities rebuild and not be forgotten.

Additional funding is sorely needed to restore homes and small businesses, get local governments the help they need, and rebuild roads, bridges, and other critical infrastructure. Therefore, ahead of anticipated funding bills this month, I am reiterating the need for a new Congressional appropriation of \$13.5 billion as described in North Carolina's September 15, 2025 federal funding request, including:

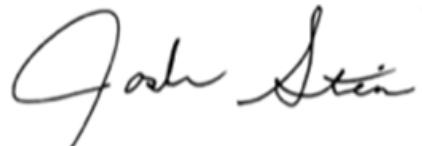
- **Substantially increasing CDBG-DR funding to expedite assistance for housing recovery, public infrastructure, and economic revitalization.** North Carolina has implemented its CDBG-DR programs faster than any other state in recent history. The single-family housing program has already received more than 7,400 applications from residents seeking to repair or rebuild their homes, with more coming in every day. Additional funding will allow more families to be served while also supporting critical infrastructure and economic revitalization projects in a manner that is faster and more predictable than the current rate of FEMA Public Assistance.
- **Supporting small businesses with grants or forgivable loans.** Small business is the beating heart of western North Carolina's economy. Yet, according to a survey of affected small businesses, only one in seven were above pre-Helene revenue, with more than half of businesses below 80% of pre-Helene revenue levels.
- **Strengthening the Community Disaster Loan program to support local governments** in their ongoing recovery. Widespread property and economic damage have significantly reduced local revenues, making this support essential to sustaining core government functions such as fire, police, and trash pickup. This will enable local leaders to focus their attention on rebuilding infrastructure and boosting economic recovery in their community.
- **Increasing support for the rebuilding of critical infrastructure,** including roads and local water and sewer systems that are critical to the economic recovery of the region.

In addition to the state's request for a new disaster supplemental, the state seeks your help urging FEMA to act on the Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP). HMGP program allows communities to rebuild from disasters in ways that mitigate the impacts of future disasters, including by acquiring or elevating homes deemed to be at significant risk of future flood damage. Working closely with local governments, our state has submitted applications for the acquisition of more than 560 Hurricane Helene-damaged properties. Yet applications worth \$240 million submitted as far back as February 2025 remain with FEMA without a decision. Further delay of approvals and disbursements keeps communities and families in limbo, in some cases forcing homeowners to pay expenses on homes they cannot live in while they await word from FEMA.

State and local governments, private corporations and charities are contributing mightily to this work, but their efforts alone cannot restore our communities – the scale of the damage is too great. Additional federal funding is necessary and will revitalize western North Carolina's vibrant communities. Congress moved quickly in the wake of the storm to support immediate

recovery, and it is now time for the federal government to step up once again. The people of western North Carolina have demonstrated remarkable grit and determination. It is the responsibility of government to match their efforts to help them rebuild stronger and create a more stable future. Thank you for standing with the people of western North Carolina in their time of need.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Josh Stein".

Josh Stein
Governor