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Clarence E. Anthony

October 1, 2024

The Honorable Mike Johnson
Speaker of the House
U.S. House of Representatives
H-232, The Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Chuck Schumer
Majority Leader
U.S. Senate
S-221, The Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Hakeem S. Jeffries
Minority Leader
U.S. House of Representatives
H-204, The Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Minority Leader
U.S. Senate
S-230, The Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Speaker Johnson, Majority Leader Schumer, Minority Leader Jeffries, and Minority Leader McConnell,

On behalf of the National League of Cities (NLC) and the local leaders we represent, we write to urge Congress to swiftly pass an emergency supplemental appropriations bill before the end of the year to provide the necessary funding for communities impacted by a series of devastating natural disasters. These include the 2023 Lahaina wildfire in Hawaii, the 2024 wildfires in California, Nevada, Oregon, and Colorado, severe storms in Iowa and Illinois, as well as Hurricanes Debby, Francine, Beryl, and the recent Hurricane Helene, which destroyed entire towns and devastated the lives of so many of our residents.

Local governments are on the front lines of disaster response and recovery, but they cannot do it alone. Federal assistance is crucial to rebuilding infrastructure, restoring vital services, and helping families and businesses recover from these widespread disasters. The communities affected by the 2023 and 2024 disasters are facing an unprecedented recovery challenge, and timely federal intervention is essential to ensure they can rebuild stronger and more resilient.

While NLC appreciates that Congress recently passed a continuing resolution to keep the government open, we are concerned that without passing full-year appropriations, critical programs may remain underfunded, creating uncertainty around federal disaster response efforts. Of particular concern is the potential for FEMA to run out of funds, which would severely hamper both short-term and long-term recovery efforts for the many cities and towns still grappling with the aftermath of these catastrophic events.

As you know, FEMA plays a pivotal role in disaster response, and communities are relying on the agency to provide resources and support for rebuilding and recovery. However, without immediate supplemental appropriations, FEMA may not have the funds necessary to adequately support these recovery efforts, leaving impacted communities without the assistance they urgently need.

In addition to immediate funding for FEMA, we also urge Congress to pass supplemental appropriations that include Community Development Block Grant-Disaster Recovery (CDBG-DR) assistance for long-term recovery efforts. CDBG-DR funding is essential for helping communities sustainably rebuild their infrastructure, housing and economy. We request that the legislation require the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) to quickly administer assistance while ensuring local governments are given the flexibility to direct funding to the specific needs of their communities and residents. Flexibility will allow cities to better address diverse recovery challenges and build back more resiliently.

We also request Congress provide the U.S. Department of Transportation (USDOT) with additional Federal Highway Administration Emergency Relief funds and allow for the repair of essential roads so that residents can return to their homes. We recommend Congress allow half of these funds to be flexible for use on non-Federal-aid highways to ensure that the worst road system issues are addressed immediately.

We respectfully request Congress prioritize passing an emergency supplemental appropriations bill to fully fund FEMA, USDOT Emergency Relief and provide CDBG-DR assistance, while giving local governments the flexibility they need to address the specific recovery needs of their communities. Doing so will not only ensure communities receive the support needed to recover but will also demonstrate the federal government's commitment to helping Americans rebuild their lives after disaster strikes.

Thank you for your leadership on this critical issue. NLC and our members are ready to work with you to ensure these communities receive the resources they need to recover fully.

Sincerely,



Clarence E. Anthony
CEO and Executive Director