



THE UNITED STATES
CONFERENCE OF MAYORS



September 29, 2020

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 Leaders
United States House of Representatives
U.S. Capitol Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Speaker Pelosi and Leader McCarthy:

On behalf of our collective organizations, we write in support of H.R. 8266, the *FEMA Assistance Relief Act*, introduced by Representative Peter DeFazio and a bipartisan coalition of Members. Given the frequency and severity of disasters this fall, we urge swift passage of this legislation in the House as it will make timely changes to assistance provided during an unparalleled 2020 disaster season.

This legislation makes a critical change to FEMA assistance by adjusting the FEMA cost share for all Emergencies and Major Disasters declared in calendar year 2020 to not less than 90 percent Federal and 10 percent non-Federal. From hurricanes, wildfires, tornadoes, and myriad other events, this will provide much needed relief to state and local governments that are struggling with a pandemic, higher-than-usual unemployment, and economic recovery.

States and localities also support the provision in this legislation that adjusts the FEMA cost share for all COVID-19 related Emergency and Major Disaster declarations to 100 percent Federal. The statute that the President invoked (Section 501(b) of the *Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act* (42 U.S.C. 5121-5207)) to declare a national emergency for COVID-19 acknowledges that "... the primary responsibility for response rests with the United States because... the United States exercises exclusive or preeminent

responsibility and authority.” Therefore, the shift to 100 percent Federal cost share is wholly justified and we appreciate Congress’s willingness to address our collective ask for this waiver.

Finally, the bill clarifies eligible assistance under the Stafford Act for purposes of COVID-19 related disasters. On August 25, 2020, we sent a letter to Administrator Gaynor asking him not to change guidance on eligibility while state and local governments remain in a state of response for COVID-19. This legislation will clarify Congressional intent and ensure we can continue procuring equipment such as personal protective equipment (PPE) and other services for applicants including public schools, public transit, and courthouses.

Thank you very much for your attention to our request and we hope you can move this legislation quickly through both chambers. This legislation will provide much needed assistance to state, local, tribal and territorial governments. It is an important and urgently needed step that will help our nation combat this global pandemic and a continually challenging 2020 disaster season.

Sincerely,

National Governors Association
Governors Homeland Security Advisors Council
International City/County Management Association
International Association of Emergency Managers
National Association of Counties
National Conference of State Legislatures
National Emergency Management Association
National League of Cities
The Council of State Governments
The United States Conference of Mayors

cc:

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
The Honorable Chuck Schumer
The Honorable Peter DeFazio
The Honorable Nita Lowey