

The Honorable Joseph R. Biden, Jr.  
President of the United States  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW  
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear Mr. President:

We write today to reemphasize our support for the State of Pennsylvania's request for a major disaster declaration following serious flooding in Northeastern Pennsylvania on September 9, 2023. Governor Shapiro requested the major disaster declaration following the event, specifically asking that Individual Assistance be authorized for Lackawanna County and that Public Assistance be authorized for Lackawanna, Luzerne, and Wyoming Counties. The damage to local infrastructure was severe and requires federal support. We write today to emphasize the need for FEMA to provide meaningful assistance to impacted communities expeditiously.

It is our understanding that impacted local governments, Pennsylvania Emergency Management Agency (PEMA), and FEMA have been in conversation for several weeks attempting to quantify and contextualize the outstanding needs that would be eligible for federal assistance. Specifically, we understand that FEMA and PEMA have been in extended discussions about the total cost of damage to eligible infrastructure in the impacted communities. In the Joint Preliminary Damage Assessments (PDAs) completed for the three affected counties, PEMA estimated that damages exceeded \$25.3 million, well above the threshold required to qualify for Public Assistance. This damage exceeds the capacity of local government's recovery capabilities if federal assistance is not provided. It is critical that the request for Public Assistance funding, which provides relief to public entities for certain emergency services and the repair or replacement of disaster-damaged facilities, is provided.

As the need for a major disaster declaration has been discussed further, funding sources beyond FEMA's Public Assistance program have been raised as necessary components of a recovery plan. While we agree that other funding can and should be leveraged to facilitate recovery, that money should be a complement to the FEMA resources explicitly dedicated to assisting in these situations, not a replacement.

We have heard from leaders in Northeastern Pennsylvania about the urgent need for assistance. We urge you to approve Governor Shapiro's current major disaster declaration request. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,