



Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-3605

September 22, 2022

The Honorable Deanne Criswell
Administrator
Federal Emergency Management Agency
500 C Street S.W.
Washington, DC 20472

Dear Administrator Criswell,

We write regarding the lack of clarity and to highlight the potential for disparate impacts surrounding how the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) interprets severe local impacts to communities who incur disasters. As you know, Section 1232(a) of the *Disaster Recovery Reform Act (DRRA)* directed FEMA to give greater consideration to severe local impacts or recent multiple disasters when analyzing whether an event should be declared a federal disaster. Additionally, the Administrator was directed to make corresponding adjustments to FEMA's policies and regulations regarding such consideration. To date, no such clarification has been issued and FEMA declined to provide further detail to how it interprets these impacts on small communities in the Proposed Rulemaking "Cost of Assistance Estimates in the Disaster Declaration Process for the Public Assistance Program" (85 FR 240).

This lack of clarity has caused negative economic consequences for the communities we represent. For example, the members of Golden Spread Electric Cooperative – a non-profit electric generation and transmission cooperative based in Texas – recently experienced \$15 million in damages stemming from Winter Storm Billy. This storm produced significant icing and strong winds, damaging miles of distribution lines and poles and causing extended power outages. However, since the combined damage (total dollar amount) did not meet Texas' 2020 state threshold (\$38.5 million), they did not qualify for FEMA assistance. Because of current policy, vital federal assistance was unable to reach these small communities simply because they are located in a large, populous state. We believe this storm is an example of a disaster that should be declared a major disaster in Texas, despite not exceeding the arbitrary state threshold.

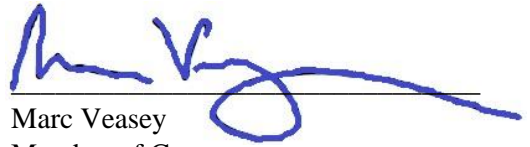
While we appreciate recent remarks you have made recognizing that the state threshold/per capita formulas may not adequately reflect the impact of disasters on underserved communities, we respectfully request you provide *written* guidance to help states determine how FEMA will consider severe local impacts or recent multiple disasters when the total cost of the disaster does not exceed the state threshold. Without this guidance, many communities across this great country, including rural communities, will be forced to forego meaningful and impactful access to FEMA disaster relief.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter and we look forward to your prompt response.

Sincerely,



August Pfluger
Member of Congress



Marc Veasey
Member of Congress



Dan Crenshaw
Member of Congress



Al Green
Member of Congress



Mayra Flores
Member of Congress



Colin Allred
Member of Congress



Louie Gohmert
Member of Congress



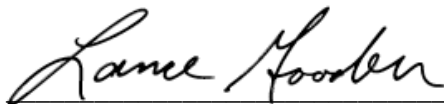
Veronica Escobar
Member of Congress



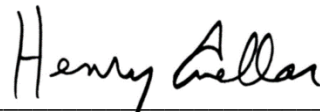
Jake Ellzey
Member of Congress



Vicente Gonzalez
Member of Congress



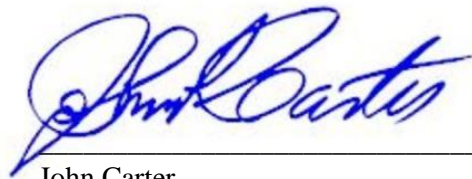
Lance Gooden
Member of Congress



Henry Cuellar
Member of Congress



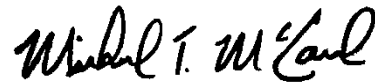
Jodey Arrington
Member of Congress



John Carter
Member of Congress



Kevin Brady
Member of Congress



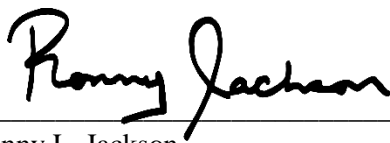
Michael T. McCaul
Member of Congress



Roger Williams
Member of Congress



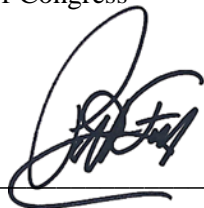
Michael C. Burgess, M.D.
Member of Congress




Ronny L. Jackson
Member of Congress



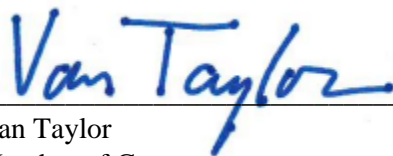
Kay Granger
Member of Congress



Pat Fallon
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Michael Cloud
Member of Congress



Van Taylor
Member of Congress



Lloyd Doggett
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Joaquin Castro
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