



May 11, 2023

The Honorable Sam Graves  
Chair, House Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure  
2165 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Rick Larsen  
Ranking Member, House Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure  
2165 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Graves and Ranking Member Larsen:

The U.S. Council of the International Association of Emergency Managers (IAEM) and the National Emergency Management Association (NEMA) are pleased to support HR 1796, the *Disaster Survivor Fairness Act*, and we applaud Ranking Member Titus and Congressman Garret Graves for taking on the task of reforming FEMA's Individual Assistance (IA) program.

Despite the best efforts of the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) to implement its portfolio of disaster assistance programs, many disaster survivors face challenges in accessing eligible programs, leaving them without assistance for which they are qualified to receive. Disasters stress communities and exacerbate pre-existing challenges in equity, social vulnerability, and access to services.

While continuing to build resilience at the community level over the long term has been prioritized through mitigation initiatives like the Building Resilient Infrastructure in Communities (BRIC) program, this nation must still modernize and streamline post-disaster assistance programs to be more efficient, effective, and equitable.

The *Disaster Survivor Fairness Act* would help address this gap in post-disaster recovery assistance by providing additional resources to FEMA, ensuring the agency can share and receive information among other federal agencies and state, local, tribal, and territorial governments, and increase opportunities for cooperation and alignment of outcomes and objectives among all participating recovery partners. If enacted, this legislation would authorize the first major update of the IA program in many years.

The legislation includes a series of reforms that will improve disaster assistance programs and survivor outcomes by:

- 1) Creating a universal application for individuals seeking federal disaster assistance (provided adequate visibility is given to ensure grantees can monitor for duplication of benefit);

- 2) Enabling federal agencies to more efficiently share relevant disaster assistance information with each other;
- 3) Expanding FEMA's ability to fund mitigation and repair projects for disaster-damaged homes;
- 4) Enabling and requiring FEMA to develop new post-disaster solutions for renters;
- 5) Facilitating efforts to shelter essential emergency response personnel immediately following a disaster; and,
- 6) Authorizing FEMA to cooperatively develop disaster recovery information portals on the internet in partnership with state-level emergency managers.

The Disaster Survivor Fairness Act represents a step toward streamlining current programs to be more accessible to people after a disaster and towards recognizing the urgent need for increased FEMA coordination with states, tribes, and territories on a pre-disaster basis to implement recovery programs rapidly and efficiently.

IAEM and NEMA strongly support this much-needed overhaul of the IA program, and we look forward to working with you and your colleagues on the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee to get the bill to the House floor for a vote.

Sincerely,



Cathy M. Clark, MA  
President  
IAEM-USA



Patrick C. Sheehan, CEM  
President  
NEMA

cc:

The Honorable Scott Perry  
The Honorable Dina Titus  
The Honorable Garret Graves