June 12, 2019

The Honorable Roger Wicker
Chairman, Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Maria Cantwell
Ranking Member, Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

International Association of Emergency Managers

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Dear Chairman Wicker and Ranking Member Cantwell:

The U.S. Council of the International Association of Emergency Managers (IAEM-USA) appreciates the opportunity to submit our position on the importance of the future of our nation's weather enterprise. IAEM-USA represents THE profession dedicated to protecting America's local communities from all hazards and threats, natural and man-made.

The value of accurate weather forecasts has been made evident in storm after storm, including the very active tornado season of 2019. So far this year over 800 tornadoes have been reported, yet under 40 deaths have occurred as a result of those tornadoes. The ability for Americans to get accurate alerts and warnings is almost taken for granted with the ability to get a forecast on your phone direct from the experts at the National Weather Service and other meteorological services.

Unfortunately, the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) plan for using the 24 GHz spectrum presents a threat to the accuracy of those very same forecasts that provide life-saving information. The radio spectrum is not a limitless resource, and since the FCC plans on utilizing existing bandwidth for next-generation tools like 5G, those plans pose a threat to current users.

NASA Administrator Jim Bridenstine and U.S. Department of Commerce Secretary Wilbur Ross highlighted in their letter to FCC Chairman Ajit Pai on February 28, 2019: "[this] would have a significant negative impact on the transmission of critical Earth science data — an American taxpayer investment spanning decades and billions of dollars with data supporting public safety, natural disaster and weather forecasting… [I]t is essential that protections are established for the critical operations of NASA, the Department of Commerce and our international partners in the 23.6 to 24 GHz spectrum band."

At the House Subcommittee on the Environment meeting of May 16, 2019, acting NOAA head Dr. Neil Jacobs said that based on the current 5G rollout plan, orbiting weather satellites would lose approximately 77 percent of the data they are currently collecting, reducing our forecast ability by as much as 30 percent. There is no other way to observe water vapor data in the upper levels of the atmosphere, and modeling of the Hurricane Sandy forecast show that the left turn into the U.S. coastline would not have been predicted in time for life-saving alerts and warnings to have been issued.

The IAEM and its membership look forward to the improvement to our nation's resilience before, during, and after a disaster that would be enhanced by the features of 5G. However, we are also

convinced that formal and unbiased testing must takes place to protect the data that is so vital to the forecasting that keeps our country and our citizens safe.

Sincerely,

Marty Shaub
President, U.S. Council of the International Association of Emergency Managers