



The Honorable John Katko
U.S. House of Representatives
2428 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Antonio Delgado
U.S. House of Representatives
1007 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

July 6, 2021

Dear Congressman Katko and Congressman Delgado,

We write to express our strong support for **H.R.3709, the Preliminary Damage Assessment Improvement Act**, which would improve the preliminary damage assessment process and simplify disaster recovery for impacted communities. We commend you for your leadership on this legislation and urge its passage so that communities across the country can rebuild more quickly after disasters strike.

Our organizations are united by a strong commitment to improving the disaster recovery process. American Flood Coalition Action (AFCA) is a nonprofit dedicated to advancing national solutions to flooding and sea level rise by driving proactive reforms that support flood-affected communities and protect our nation's residents, economy, and military installations. The National Emergency Management Association (NEMA) represents emergency management directors from all 50 states and is dedicated to enhancing public safety by improving the nation's ability to prepare for, respond to, and recover from disasters and emergencies. With 6,000 members worldwide, the International Association of Emergency Managers (IAEM), is a non-profit dedicated to promoting emergency management.

The current process of conducting preliminary damage assessments, wherein state and local officials collect information on damage that is reviewed and validated by FEMA, is outdated, inefficient, and lacks consistency across levels of government. From flooding along the Great Lakes, to coastal hurricanes, to intense storms in the Midwest, disasters are increasing in frequency and severity across the U.S. These realities, as well as predictions for yet another above-average hurricane season, reiterate the importance of expeditious and effective disaster relief. Timely, efficient, and thorough preliminary damage assessments are an essential part of the disaster recovery process. In most cases, states cannot receive a Presidential Disaster Declaration and access FEMA disaster assistance programs, such as financial assistance, temporary housing, or grants for debris removal and infrastructure restoration, until a preliminary disaster assessment is complete and validated.

This legislation would direct FEMA to convene an advisory panel of emergency management professionals and stakeholders tasked with reviewing preliminary damage assessment processes and procedures. The panel would specifically weigh various considerations to improve efficiency, communication, and other outcomes, and report on its findings to Congress. Importantly, the legislation

would also direct FEMA to implement the advisory panel's recommendations within two years. Ultimately, these recommendations would help emergency management professionals more effectively support individuals and communities affected by flooding, hurricanes, and other natural disasters, while ensuring these stakeholders can better access much-needed relief.

Our organizations thank you for your commitment to improving disaster recovery processes and helping communities in New York and across the U.S. rebuild in the wake of disasters. We stand ready to support the legislation's timely consideration in the U.S. House of Representatives, and look forward to advancing it into law.

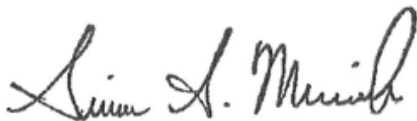
Sincerely,



Melissa Roberts
President & Executive Director
American Flood Coalition Action



Judson Freed, CEM
President
U.S. Council - International Association of Emergency Managers



Sima Merick
President
National Emergency Management Association