



April 24, 2019

The Honorable Shelley Moore Capito, Chairman
Subcommittee on Homeland Security
Committee on Appropriations
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Jon Tester, Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Homeland Security
Committee on Appropriations
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Dear Senators Capito and Tester:

On behalf of the state and local emergency managers, and county leaders across the nation, thank you for convening such a substantive hearing on the budget request for FY20 by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) on Wednesday, April 3, 2019.

Given the recent release of the budget and leadership changes of the agency, Acting Administrator Gaynor sits in a challenging position. Furthermore, with widespread reductions to the agency, most with little to no substantive justification, there was no easy response to many of your thoughtful questions. We wanted to draw to your attention to the response to one question with which we as the emergency management community have concerns.

Senator Tester's second question inquired as to the impact of the proposed 21 percent reduction to the Emergency Management Performance Grant (EMPG) Program. Citing a report done annually by the International Association of Emergency Managers (IAEM) and the National Emergency Management Association (NEMA), this program builds emergency management capability nationwide; reduces disaster costs by allowing states and locals to manage 23,331 events last year without requiring Federal assistance; and grantees embrace the moniker of being the only program in the suite of FEMA grants requiring a dollar-for-dollar match.

Unfortunately, the response by Acting Administrator Gaynor regarding the proposed reduction did not accurately convey the potential impact to the emergency management community. We would therefore like to clarify several points made during his response:

1. EMPG did not evolve out of the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001. The program represents a pinnacle of Federal, state, and local partnership of the profession with roots dating back to 1969.
2. EMPG does not "crowd out emerging threats" as was stated, but rather provides the most flexibility of any of the FEMA grants in truly establishing a baseline capability nationwide. It is the flexibility of the EMPG Program that makes it so effective.
3. The federal investment in EMPG is \$350 million – a little more than \$1 per citizen – and with the match requirement and additional state and local investment, the return on investment is at least \$700 million. This fact does not align with the statement made regarding grantees needing more "skin in the game." Our membership believes the dollar-for-dollar match represents more than an

equitable partnership. This dynamic is especially evident when compared to the 23,331 events managed in FY18 by local, tribal, and state governments without federal assistance.

4. Finally, we strongly disagree with the comments juxtaposing reductions in EMPG to compromising to an “acceptable risk.” Disaster management occurs daily in this country, so the “acceptable risk” of preventing the escalation of events and saving lives is incongruent with recent efforts of FEMA for state and local emergency managers to assume more responsibility for managing federal programs. We continue working through these efforts, but unfortunately the budget request and comments made during the hearing by FEMA leadership causes concern.

We understand the political realities of managing the federal budget, but strongly disagree with the light cast on EMPG during questions based on prudent facts. Even FEMA’s website states EMPG “plays an important role in the implementation of the National Preparedness System by supporting the building, sustainment, and delivery of core capabilities essential to achieving the National Preparedness Goal of a secure and resilient nation.” We fully agree with this sentiment and remain willing to do our part in driving down disaster costs but feel the strength of the EMPG program speaks volumes of Congress’ continued commitment to make meaningful impacts to the disaster management system.

Thank you for your continued support and know the memberships of the NEMA, IAEM, and the National Association of Counties (NACo) stand ready to assist as you determine the FY20 appropriations for the Department of Homeland Security and FEMA. For more information, please contact NEMA Deputy Director Matt Cowles at 202-624-5459 or mcowles@csg.org; IAEM-USA Government Affairs Director at 615-870-9316 or thad@iaem.com; or NACo Associate Legislative Director Lindsey Holman at 202-942-4217 or lholman@naco.org.

Sincerely,



Marty Shaub, CEM
President, IAEM-USA



Brad Richy
President, NEMA



Matt Chase
Executive Director, NACo

cc: Senator Ron Johnson, Chairman
Senator Gary Peters, Ranking Member
Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee