

Oral Testimony (Draft)

Thank you, Chairwoman Titus, Ranking Member Meadows, and distinguished members of the House Subcommittee on Economic Development, Public Buildings, and Emergency Management for this opportunity to testify on the Disaster Recovery Reform Act of 2018 and the state of disaster readiness in local governments across the country.

My name is Nick Crossley, and I am the Director of the Hamilton County, Ohio, Emergency Management and Homeland Security Agency. I have been a Certified Emergency Manager for over 19 years, and I appear before you today as the Immediate Past President of the International Association of Emergency Managers, an industry group representing THE profession dedicated to protecting America's local communities from all hazards and threats, both natural and man-made.

Local governments serve as our nation's first line of defense when disasters strike. Immediately following a disaster, local responders, including emergency managers, are first on the scene and play a key role in coordinating local response and recovery efforts, working to mitigate further damage from disasters. In the aftermath of disasters, we coordinate and help fund clean-up, recovery, and rebuilding so our residents can return to their lives as quickly as possible. It is important to remember that ALL disasters begin and end locally.

As the residents of Representative Mucarsel-Powell's South Florida Congressional District well know, the 2019 Atlantic hurricane season starts in 10 days. Meanwhile, communities across the country are constantly bombarded by numerous disasters including wildfires in Congressman Garamendi's district in Northern California, floods in the districts of Congresswoman Davids in Kansas and Congresswoman Fletcher in Texas, and tornados in the districts represented by Congressman Palmer in Alabama and Congressman Pence in Indiana. At every level, individuals, communities, and businesses must be able to plan for disasters, as well as build and sustain the capability to respond. We must understand that our local efforts will be more impactful, our communities more resilient, with the full support and partnership of our state, federal, and private sector partners. We all have our roles to play.

Our Country's resilience -- the ability to survive and recover quickly from storms and disasters without the significant loss of life or property -- involves preparedness for and mitigation against the greatest risks and hazards. The new and expanded authorities in the Disaster Recovery and Reform Act -- once those authorities have been fully implemented -- will be critical to supporting state and local efforts to promote resilience and disaster readiness. Emergency Managers at every level are grateful to Congress for the transformational tools and authorities contained in DRRRA, which the President signed into

law on October 5, 2018. This law clearly demonstrates that Congress is committed to resilience and changing the conversation to reduce disaster costs and losses across the country. The provisions within this law support those in state, local, and tribal governments, as well as FEMA, to build more resilient communities, lessen the impacts of disasters, and ultimately help individuals and communities recover quickly.

This law focuses on pre- and post-disaster mitigation to reduce the cost of disasters. Key provisions in this law enable greater investment in pre-disaster mitigation; support efforts to reduce risks from future disasters after fires; increase state and local capacity to manage disaster recovery; and provide greater support and flexibility to survivors with disabilities.

But much like the recovery from the 2017 storms, there is much work left to be done on the implementation of DRRRA. FEMA will need continued oversight and monitoring to ensure they meet their requirements, commitments, and the intent of Congress. As FEMA moves forward toward continuing to implement these provisions, it will be critical that they continue to engage and work with the entire community engaged in building resilience throughout the country, including other federal partners, state, local, and tribal governments, and the private sector.

In closing, I sincerely appreciate your giving me the opportunity

to discuss the emergency management community's reaction to the enactment and initial implementation of DRRRA, as well as the country's readiness posture for the current disaster environment. Local emergency managers have and will continue to benefit from Congress' investments in mitigation and resilience. The capabilities created, and the capacity built, will ensure that not only are our communities ready to respond to the next disaster but also withstand and recover quickly from the next disaster. While Congress has done much to incentivize resilience, much work remains to be done in order to make our communities safer and more disaster-ready in 2019 and beyond.

Thank you, Chairwoman Titus, Ranking Member Meadows, and all members of this Subcommittee. I look forward to answering any questions you may have.