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Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-4606

August 13, 2020

Dear Governor Reynolds,

I write to urge that you take immediate action to request a presidential disaster declaration based on current information as well as deploy additional state resources in response to the derecho storm earlier this week.

As of this morning, it's reported that hundreds of thousands of Iowans are still without power. As we hear from our counties and municipalities about the damage—from closed highways and flattened crops to downed cell towers and destroyed homes and businesses—there is no doubt that the scale and severity of this disaster warrants federal aid. While I understand that a preliminary disaster assessment is currently underway, we cannot afford to wait to initiate the process.

In addition to expediting your request for federal aid, I ask that you deploy more state resources as quickly as possible. Our municipalities are overwhelmed and already strained by the fallout of the COVID-19 pandemic. With entire communities cutoff from telephone and internet services, our emergency coordinators are doing their best to survey the extent of the damage and communicate immediate needs to the state, but they are at capacity. In the meantime, there are families without any ability to report damages or their needs who are waiting for someone to help them.

To that end, I urge you to utilize every available option to administer assistance immediately. I am grateful to the first responders, emergency management personnel, utility workers, and volunteers who are stepping up in the wake of the storm. However, we need more manpower on the ground and that means putting the Iowa National Guard on state active duty. There are Iowans going without basic necessities while our local leaders struggle to inventory and submit requests for help that the Iowa National Guard is well-equipped to provide. The Guard could be providing key sheltering, food, and safety check assistance to overwhelmed local officials.

I again respectfully urge that a request be made immediately for federal assistance and that additional state resources are provided, including assistance through the Iowa National Guard. At

the very least, help is needed for communities in assessing damage and meeting unmet needs. I stand ready to work with you and will do whatever it takes to get the resources necessary. I ask that you brief me as soon as possible on the latest progress made toward completion of the preliminary damage assessment and how I can help the State in the deployment of additional assistance immediately.

Sincerely,

Abby Finkenauer
Member of Congress