

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

August 19th, 2020

The Honorable Donald J. Trump
President of the United States
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.
Washington, DC 20500

Dear President Trump:

I write to respectfully support approval of the State of Iowa's full request for an expedited major disaster declaration in response to the severe storm that occurred on August 10, 2020. Additionally, I urge the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) to waive all state, local, and tribal cost-share requirements for the emergency declaration.

On August 10th, a derecho ripped across the state of Iowa bringing hurricane force winds with little advance warning. Iowans were left defenseless as the winds damaged houses and small businesses, flattened farm fields and grain silos, and destroyed thousands of trees. This storm left 550,000 homes without power. Over a week after the storm, tens of thousands of Iowan families were still going without electricity or phone service. Given the extent of the damage in its preliminary findings, the State sought an expedited Presidential Major Disaster Declaration for counties impacted by this storm. This request was for both individual and public assistance with the total estimated damage of this storm at more than \$3.9 billion.

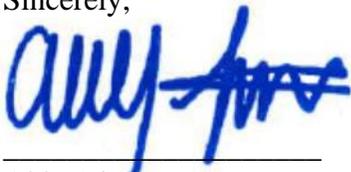
On August 17th, you announced your approval of the State's request; however, when FEMA released its official fact sheet on the declaration, the request for Individual Assistance remained under review. While I am grateful for your quick response and approval of Public Assistance, Individual Assistance is critical to helping Iowa families and homeowners recover from the storm. While I understand that a thorough review of the damages is an important step in this process, it's clear that severity and magnitude of damage warrants such assistance. A decision is needed so that Iowans can begin taking the necessary steps to document their damages and continue the recovery process. I urge you to swiftly approve the State's request for Individual Assistance in impacted counties so that the hundreds of thousands of Iowans can afford to feed their families, repair their homes, and get back to their daily lives.

Additionally, as state and local governments continue to deal with the ongoing public health and budgetary impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, I urge you to direct FEMA Administrator Gaynor to waive the non-federal cost-share requirements for federal emergency assistance. State, local, and tribal governments across the country are already facing declining revenue and unforeseen budget gaps on account of the ongoing pandemic and the limited amount of direct federal assistance received to-date to cover related expenses. Iowa communities can barely afford to cover the costs of essential services, let alone continued COVID-19 response efforts and the additional cost of this disaster will be devastating. FEMA has the authority to increase the federal cost-share to 100 percent for emergency work. Now more than ever, Iowans need FEMA to exercise this authority to help our communities recover.

The extensive destruction brought by this storm, with so little notice, is hard to comprehend. I appreciate the thousands of workers and first responders who responded to these events quickly and have worked tirelessly since to help Iowa recover, and the National Guard members currently helping on the ground. I have witnessed communities and neighbors come together to make sure that people are safe, have access to food and water, and provide assistance in any way possible. But Iowans have significant unmet needs and additional aid is critical. It is crucial your Administration grant the State's request for Individual Assistance and to use its existing authority to waive state and local cost-share requirements and provide 100% assistance for disaster response work.

I appreciate your timely consideration of this request. I stand ready to work with you, Iowa's Governor and Iowa's Congressional Delegation to make sure Iowans receive this full and necessary assistance to move forward with rebuilding stronger than before.

Sincerely,



Abby Finkenauer
Member of Congress