

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

December 14, 2023

President Joe Biden
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20500

Administrator Deanne Criswell
Federal Emergency Management Agency
500 C Street SW
Washington, DC 20024

Dear President Biden and Administrator Criswell,

We write on behalf of the residents of Bristol, Hampden, and Worcester Counties in Massachusetts, which recently experienced catastrophic and historic flooding. Our constituents have detailed costly damage to buildings, roads, and other structures by torrential rainfall that began the night of September 11, when upwards of 11 inches of rainfall inundated parts of the Commonwealth in just a few hours.¹ In response, on December 11, Governor Healey submitted a request for assistance for Bristol, Hampden, and Worcester Counties under the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act. We urge you to swiftly approve the Commonwealth's request for much-needed relief.

The residents of these counties have remained resilient in the face of hardship, but are in dire need of assistance. In Leominster, flooding impacted all 26 square miles of the city, including major damage to two dams, roads, and bridges connecting neighborhoods to the city's economic districts. The ground washed away beneath sections of Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority Commuter Rail tracks through the city, temporarily affecting MBTA service to Leominster.² In Springfield, a water main break released five to ten million gallons of water and necessitated a boil water order.³ In North Attleborough, around 200 homes reported flood damages.⁴ Towns surrounding these cities also saw roads washed out and other public infrastructure severely damaged. These damages prompted Massachusetts Governor Maura Healey to declare a State of Emergency on September 12.

We are grateful to the first responders and local and state officials who have worked heroically to keep residents safe and respond to community members in need. Additionally, we are thankful for the work of the Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency in partnership with FEMA, which conducted an assessment of the damages to the communities impacted and determined the extent of damages eligible for FEMA assistance. Following that determination, Governor Healey has submitted a request for a major disaster declaration under the Stafford Act. Specifically, the Governor has requested a designation of the Public Assistance Program for Hampden and Worcester Counties, the Individual Assistance

¹ "Leominster Public Schools to close Wednesday after flooding, district announces," Boston Globe, Shannon Larson and Amanda Kaufman, September 12, 2023, <https://www.bostonglobe.com/2023/09/12/metro/mass-flooding-leominster-live-updates>.

² "MBTA Commuter Rail tracks compromised by flooding in Leominster," WCVB, Phil Tenser, September 12, 2023, <https://www.wcvb.com/article/leominster-massachusetts-flooding-mbta-commuter-rail-fitchburg-line/45102839#>.

³ "Massive water main break impacting Springfield, neighboring towns," Western Mass News, Maria Wilson, September 12, 2023, <https://www.westernmassnews.com/2023/09/12/springfield-water-sewer-reporting-service-disruption/>.

⁴ "Around 200 homes left with flood damage in North Attleborough after heavy rainfall," NBC Boston, Matt Fortin, September 12, 2023, <https://www.nbcboston.com/news/local/around-200-homes-left-with-flood-damage-in-north-attleborough-after-heavy-rainfall/3133798/>.

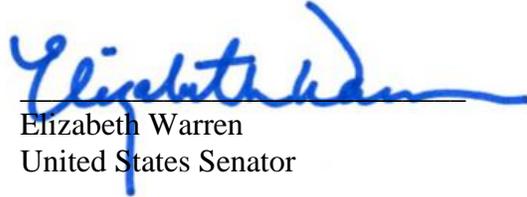
Program for Bristol and Worcester Counties, and the Hazard Mitigation Grant Program for the entire Commonwealth.

In light of the profound impact to Bristol, Hampden, and Worcester Counties, we respectfully ask that you issue a major disaster declaration with all available speed. Doing so will allow FEMA to provide critical Public Assistance, Individual Assistance, and Hazard Mitigation funding to the Commonwealth in a timely and efficient manner. On behalf of the communities affected, we thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,



Edward J. Markey
United States Senator



Elizabeth Warren
United States Senator



Richard E. Neal
Member of Congress



James P. McGovern
Member of Congress



Lori Trahan
Member of Congress



Jake Auchincloss
Member of Congress