

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

August 7, 2024

The Honorable Charles Schumer
Majority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Mike Johnson
Speaker
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Minority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Hakeem Jeffries
Minority Leader
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Patty Murray
Chair
Committee on Appropriations
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Tom Cole
Chairman
Committee on Appropriations
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Susan Collins
Vice Chair
Committee on Appropriations
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Rosa DeLauro
Ranking Member
Committee on Appropriations
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Speaker Johnson, Leader Schumer, Leader McConnell, Leader Jeffries, Chair Murray, Chairman Cole, Vice Chair Collins, and Ranking Member DeLauro:

We are writing as a follow up on our November 3, 2023, letter regarding the urgent need for federal relief for the Maui wildfires. As Congress considers full-year appropriations bills and supplemental requests from the Administration, we wish to emphasize that many of these requests are critical to Maui's recovery.

As we approach the one-year anniversary of the wildfires, Maui continues to suffer from the effects of the deadliest wildfires in over a century. While the initial shock may be fading for some, the pain endures. We mourn the more than 100 lives tragically lost and recognize the immense impact on the community. The disaster devastated Lahaina, damaging or destroying nearly 3,000 structures, displacing over 7,000 residents, and affecting 3,000 students. The fires consumed over 2,100 acres, and the debris removal process is still ongoing. Essential services—healthcare, education, and infrastructure—have been severely impacted not just in West

Maui, but across the island and on Lāna‘i and Moloka‘i.

The local economy faces unprecedented challenges. Businesses of all sizes continue to struggle, and our workforce continues to deal with the lingering effects of over 10,000 unemployment claims filed in the three weeks following the fires. The total economic impact is now estimated at approximately \$5.5 billion.

In response to this ongoing crisis, the Office of Management and Budget’s recent letter on disaster funding highlights the need for \$3.5 billion for the Community Development Block Grant Disaster Recovery (CDBG-DR) program. This funding is critical not only for Maui’s recovery, but also for addressing unmet needs from other disasters declared in 2023 and 2024. Wildfires are impacting many areas of the country and, as the Administration emphasized, we are amidst an “extraordinary” hurricane season. Prompt congressional action is essential to ensure effective disaster response.

We appreciate the bipartisan commitment expressed by many in Congress to support Maui, and we urge you to follow through on this commitment by providing the necessary supplemental disaster funding. Congress must act swiftly to allocate funds to key departments and agencies to activate or continue recovery programs for Maui. Our requests include:

Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration, and Related Agencies

Department of Agriculture

- We urge Congress to provide \$130 million for the Rural Development Disaster Assistance Fund to support Maui wildfire recovery.
- We urge Congress to provide \$500,000 for the Farm Services Agency, Emergency Forest Restoration Program to support Maui wildfire recovery.
- We urge Congress to provide \$5 million for the Natural Resources Conservation Service, Emergency Watershed Protection Program to support Maui wildfire recovery.
- We support the President’s request for \$10 million for the Rural Housing Service to support wildfire recovery efforts in Maui and elsewhere.

Homeland Security

Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA)

- Congress should provide an additional \$20.9 billion for the Disaster Relief Fund to meet anticipated needs through Fiscal Year (FY) 2025.
 - This includes \$9 billion for anticipated needs for activity pursuant to a major disaster declaration (or the “majors” balance) for the remainder of FY 2024, \$11 billion for anticipated needs for the majors balance through the end of FY 2025 and \$900 million for the DRF’s base balance.
- We request language establishing a 100 percent federal cost share for debris removal.

Transportation, Housing and Urban Development, and Related Agencies

Department of Housing and Urban Development

- We support the President’s request for \$3.5 billion for the Community Development Block Grant – Disaster Relief (CDBG-DR).
- The *Reforming Disaster Recovery Act* to authorize the CDBG-DR program.
- We request an expansion of the Low Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC), including an increase to Hawai‘i’s LIHTC credit allocation, a reduction of the portion of developments that must be financed by Private Activity Bonds to 25 percent, and the designation of Maui as a Difficult Development Area.

Commerce, Justice, Science, and Related Agencies

Economic Development Administration (EDA)

- We support the President’s request \$510 million (nationwide) for the EDA’s Economic Adjustment Assistance Program for disaster-related purposes, long-term recovery efforts, capacity building, and addressing unmet needs.

Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies

National Park Service

- We ask that Congress provide \$40 million for Disaster Recovery Grants to help restore and recover important historic properties lost or damaged in Lahaina.
- We support the President’s request for \$1.25 million for the Leaking Underground Storage Tank Trust Fund to address impacts to underground storage tanks.

Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies

Department of Health and Human Services

- We support the President’s request for \$144 million to expand substance use and mental health prevention and treatment services in Maui.
- We support the President’s request for \$188 million for the Children and Family Services Program to support disaster case management in Maui.
- We support the President’s request for \$19 million for the Aging and Disability Services Program to rebuild and replace physical infrastructure damaged by the wildfires and support survivors with disabilities and survivors who are older adults.
- We urge Congress to provide \$25 million for the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry to support the development of a comprehensive surveillance, data collection, monitoring system, and disease registry of all individuals affected by the wildfire disaster.

Department of Education (ED)

- We urge Congress to provide at least \$40 million for ED’s Immediate Aid to Restart School Operations Program (RESTART) to support the continued operation of K-12 programs on Maui.
- We urge Congress to provide at least \$2.2 million for Project School Emergency Response to Violence (Project SERV) to help students dealing with trauma and related disruption as a result of the Maui wildfires.
- We urge Congress to provide \$10 million for the Native Hawaiian Education Program to support construction and related pre-development activities for impacted schools and

education programs on Maui.

Department of Labor

- We request the extension of Disaster Unemployment Assistance to 39 weeks after the disaster declaration, as proposed by the *Hawai'i Wildfire Disaster Unemployment Assistance Continuity Act*.

Energy and Water Development

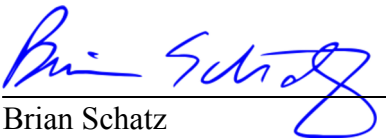
Department of Energy

- We support the President's request for \$15 million to implement energy recovery efforts and provide technical assistance from the National Labs.

Given the scale of this disaster and the ongoing needs, we must act decisively to ensure our communities receive the relief they require. We echo the sentiments expressed by the Administration regarding the urgency of this request and the necessity for Congress to address these critical needs without delay.

Thank you for your attention to this vital matter.

Sincerely,



Brian Schatz
United States Senator



Mazie K. Hirono
United States Senator



Ed Case
Member of Congress



Jim Tokuda
Member of Congress