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Congress of the United States

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House of Representatives Washington, DC 20515

February 6, 2025

The Honorable Jim Jordan
Chair
House Judiciary Committee
2138 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Jamie Raskin
Ranking Member
House Judiciary Committee
2138 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Scott Fitzgerald
Chair
Subcommittee on the Administrative State,
Regulatory Reform, Antitrust
House Judiciary Committee
2444 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Jerrold Nadler
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on the Administrative State,
Regulatory Reform, Antitrust
House Judiciary Committee
2132 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chair Jordan, Ranking Member Raskin, Chair Fitzgerald, Ranking Member Nadler, and members of the Subcommittee:

My district in Southern California has been completely devastated by the Eaton Fire. In Altadena and northern Pasadena, the fire took our neighbors' lives and destroyed the structures that provided stability to countless families' hopes, dreams, and memories. This fire destroyed over 9,500 structures, left 20,000 people homeless, forced numerous health centers to close, and burned schools, businesses, and community institutions to the ground. And this was just one of six serious fires across Los Angeles, including the more-than 23,000-acre Palisades Fire.

Places that've served as safe havens for generations of Angelenos, and where community was built across the San Gabriel Valley, are now unrecognizable. When Black Americans fled racial segregation in the Jim Crow South and came to Los Angeles, many made Altadena their home because there was no redlining there preventing them from obtaining home loans. It has remained a hub of Black culture and civic life in Los Angeles. Altadena has also long been a hub of the creative community in Southern California, where so many working-class artists came because they could afford to buy homes, build studio spaces, and collaborate.

Thousands had to flee their homes at a moment's notice, frantically searching for pets and crying out to loved ones, with nothing more than the clothes on their backs. Entire lives were shattered as thousands of people lost everything they had worked for—homes, cherished belongings, and irreplaceable memories. Last week, I had the honor of introducing Dr. Jackie Jacobs, an Eaton Fire survivor, to members of Democratic House Leadership as they toured the Eaton Fire damage. Dr. Jacobs dedicated her life to education and became the first Black administrator of Pasadena City College. Now retired at 88 years old, after decades of invaluable contributions to our community, she tragically lost her home of 30 years in Altadena.

Most tragically, first responders have so far found 17 people who lost their lives in the Eaton Fire. People like Anthony Mitchell Sr., a dedicated father who died alongside his son while waiting for help. Just a week before the fires began,

Anthony told his son that what he treasured most in life was not money or possessions, but his family. And Victor Shaw, who died outside of his longtime family home, with a garden hose in his hand. He did everything he could to save it. And Erliene Louise Kelley, who bought her home in Altadena with her late husband, Howard, in the late 1960s. Together, they raised two kids, watched their grandchildren and great-grandchildren grow, and celebrated holidays, birthdays and anniversaries. And Zhi Feng Zhao, an 84-year-old immigrant from China. He was in the restaurant business before he retired, and was such a caring and thoughtful father that his son bought him his house in Altadena, where he lost his life in the fire.

The Southern California wildfires are one of the deadliest natural disasters in our country's history. The communities I represent are in the fight of their lives trying to recover from unimaginable tragedy. Trying to rebuild their homes, navigate insurance issues, recover lost documents, and just keep themselves and their families safe. And yet, scores of Republicans, led by President Trump and Speaker Johnson, are spreading misinformation about the wildfires and threatening to place conditions on disaster assistance for the victims in California. I fear that this hearing, with its focus on attacking California's state regulations, is intended to provide pretext for such conditions on disaster aid. I invite every Member on this Subcommittee to visit my district, see the devastation for yourself, and look the victims in the eye when you tell them they don't deserve help from their country because you disagree with certain policies passed by their state. Any threats to withhold federal aid from wildfire victims, and any false claims undermining California's wildfire prevention and mitigation efforts, will only make it harder for people to recover.

Partnership across every level of government is essential for our communities to rebuild and recover from this tragedy. I'm incredibly grateful that President Biden's overnight disaster declaration made it possible for national resources from all over the country to come to Los Angeles immediately, such as FEMA and the Small Business Administration disaster loan program. And I am thankful that President Trump answered my invitation to visit Southern California and meet with survivors, and I appreciate that during his briefing on January 24th, he emphasized that he would support Californians "100 percent" in our recovery efforts, and did not mention conditions on disaster assistance.

The assistance provided through these federal programs has been nothing short of lifesaving, delivering tens of millions of dollars in direct relief to affected households, providing temporary housing for thousands of people who lost their homes, and operating Disaster Recovery Centers all day every day for survivors to speak with local, state, and federal agencies about their needs.

Wildfires have no political affiliation, and they know no political party. This is the United States of America – we help our citizens when they fall victim to a natural disaster, regardless of their political party or opinions. And we do it without strings attached - just like we did in December for victims of Hurricanes Milton and Helene. I urge members of this Subcommittee to not forget the people of Altadena and Pasadena—people like Dr. Jacobs and countless others—who have suffered massive devastation and lost everything, and remember that we need your partnership to recover from this disaster. I look forward to working with each of you to secure critical disaster relief funding that is necessary for this vibrant, beautiful, unique region to recover and rebuild.

Sincerely,



Rep. Judy Chu
Member of Congress