

STATEMENT

OF

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BEFORE THE

COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS SUBCOMMITTEE ON HOMELAND SECURITY
UNITED STATES HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES WASHINGTON, D.C.

“Fiscal Year 2025 Budget Request for the Federal Emergency Management Agency”

Submitted

By

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Chairman Joyce, Ranking Member Cuellar, and Members of the Subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today to discuss FEMA's \$33.1 billion Fiscal Year (FY) 2025 President's Budget request. FEMA's mission is to help people before, during, and after disasters, and our FY 2025 appropriations request will help us continue to meet this critical mission.

Emergency management has changed in recent years, and emergency managers across the country – at every level of government – are asked to do more, and FEMA is no exception.

To support communities across the nation, FEMA must have funding commensurate with growing demands and risks of disasters. Whether it is a wildfire, flood, derecho storm, or other disaster, it is vital that FEMA tap into an adequately funded Disaster Relief Fund (DRF). For FY 2025, FEMA's total request includes \$22.7 billion for the DRF to respond to new and ongoing disasters. This is a \$2.0 billion increase over FY 2024 funding levels to support continued recovery efforts, such as those in Maui, after the most devastating wildfires in the island's history.

The Maui fires destroyed much of the historic town of Lahaina and forced its tightknit community to scatter across Maui and beyond. In response, FEMA and the U.S. Small Business Administration approved more than \$339.0 million in federal assistance to survivors. FEMA continues to partner with interagency, federal, State, and local governmental leaders to ensure survivors and businesses on Maui have access to critical resources as they rebuild. Without essential funding in the DRF, we could not support response and recovery in Maui, and other current and future disaster sites.

At the DRF's present funding levels, FEMA is in a similar position as last year and we may need to resort to Immediate Needs Funding (INF) before the end of the Fiscal Year, preserving limited DRF balances for life and safety response operations and other critical survivor needs. To mitigate INF risks, I urge the Committee to act on the disaster supplemental request for FY 2024, which requested an additional \$9.0 billion for the DRF.

FEMA requires not only a fully funded DRF but also a well-trained workforce ready to deploy at a moment's notice. FEMA's workforce is our most valuable asset. The FY 2025 Budget provides \$2.4 billion in personnel pay, compensation, and benefits because workforce well-being, recruitment, and retention are always critical priorities for FEMA.

FEMA's FY 2025 Budget includes \$6.8 million to support disaster workforce readiness. This funding provides training and education enhancements for the Incident Management Assistance Team and Federal Coordinating Officer cadres. These personnel are crucial, as they provide hands-on support to survivors after a disaster and coordinate federal assistance with agency partners.

The FY 2025 Budget request also provides \$15.2 million for three additional Logistics Staging Management Teams. Strategically placed across the United States, these teams ensure rapid delivery of resources to our State, local, tribal, and territorial (SLTT) partners.

This funding also provides increased staffing for existing five staging management teams. These additional teams will support FEMA's efforts to significantly reduce lag time in responding to and prepositioning lifesaving and life sustaining commodities.

One of my priorities for this year is continuing to boost SLTT capacity for responding to extreme weather events. FEMA no longer has a disaster "season" — natural disasters occur throughout the entire year, often concurrently and in places that are not familiar with the type and level of these disasters. As FEMA Administrator, I talk to State directors regularly and, in nearly every conversation, they ask for help improving their capacity to address this year-round disaster response tempo.

In this challenging environment, the safety and security of the FEMA workforce are essential. Structural and technical improvements at several facilities throughout the United States will allow the workforce to better prepare for, and respond to, domestic events. FEMA's Budget request includes a total of \$101.7 million for facility requirements. Information technology (IT) is also essential to FEMA operations and as the field of emergency management evolves, IT systems must match that need. For years, FEMA struggled with deficiencies in data analytics and financial system reporting, consequently FEMA requests \$122.1 million in IT modernization initiatives. Just one example is the ongoing Financial Systems Modernization effort, which is replacing an outdated 44-year-old legacy system with a modern and secure integrated system.

FEMA's FY 2025 Budget request also ensures timely and accurate communications to each and every community across our nation regarding potential threats to public safety. FEMA's Budget request includes \$46.9 million in funding for the Integrated Public Alert and Warning System to continue this vital mission, which is an increase of \$8.0 million. This funding will allow FEMA to address gaps standards, outreach, training, technical assistance, and sustainment activities, to help ensure communities are prepared to respond quickly and effectively to natural threats, local hazards, natural or human-induced emergencies, and catastrophic incidents. Our Budget request also includes \$10.6 million to support continued modernization of our National Public Warning System.

As FEMA continues to adapt to this rapidly intensifying disaster cadence, one thing is clear: FEMA is more than just a response and recovery agency. FEMA helps communities become more resilient and better prepared before a disaster strikes.

One way FEMA achieves this goal is through grant programs. Grants aid SLTT governments and the private sector to help build operational capabilities needed to implement preparedness strategies and reduce or eliminate long-term risks to people and property. FEMA's FY 2025 Budget request includes \$3.2 billion for grants to help safeguard our communities, citizens, and support our nation's first responders.

For example, the Nonprofit Security Grant Program (NSGP) provides funding for physical security enhancements and other security-related activities for non-profit organizations at a high risk of terrorist attack. FEMA's FY 2025 Budget requests \$385 million, an increase of

\$80.0 million for the NSGP, to expand the program to more non-profit organizations in both high-risk urban and rural areas.

Additionally, FEMA's Budget request includes an increase of \$25.0 million, each for the Assistance to Firefighters Grant (AFG) and Staffing for Adequate Fire and Emergency Response (SAFER) programs. An increase to the AFG Program will enable FEMA to provide additional financial assistance directly to eligible fire departments, non-affiliated emergency medical service organizations, and State Fire Training Academies for wellness activities for firefighters for cancer screening, cancer awareness, and to protect communities from polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS). Yet oversubscription to these programs is stark. For example, in 2023, the SAFER Program received 1,582 applications from fire departments and volunteer firefighter interest organizations across the nation, seeking over \$2.8 billion in funding, yet the program was only able to fund 177 applications, leaving a significant unmet need.

FEMA's FY 2025 Budget request also includes \$1.0 billion for the Building Resilient Infrastructure and Communities (BRIC) grant program. These grants support SLTTs as they undertake hazard mitigation projects, reducing risks they face from disasters and natural hazards.

Similarly, strong, disaster-resistant building codes are a cornerstone of effective hazard mitigation and resilient communities. Building codes save lives and property. Adopting the latest building codes can save \$11 per each \$1 invested, according to a nationwide study FEMA conducted in 2020. In support of this effort, FEMA's FY 2025 Budget request includes \$2.1 million to implement the agency's Building Codes Strategy and support the White House's National Initiative to Advance Building Codes.

We also recognize that on average, disaster-related floods lead to more deaths every year than any other natural events leading FEMA to request \$364 million for Flood Hazard Mapping and Risk Analysis, a \$51.0 million increase, to increase FEMA's map inventory and assist communities to better prepare for future conditions. These funds will also help modernize coastal mapping and better prepare our communities for future flooding conditions.

Finally, FEMA requested \$175.0 million for flood mitigation assistance grants, which are funded out of the National Flood Insurance Fund. These funds will not only support communities with their mitigation projects, but will also assist FEMA's goal to advance environmental justice by making critical investments in disadvantaged communities through the Justice40 initiative.

Communities in your districts and across our nation continue to rely more on FEMA than ever before, and our FY 2025 Budget request provides necessary resources to meet the mission and serve your constituents as they recover from a disaster.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify, and I look forward to your questions.