TESTIMONY

OF

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BEFORE

THE

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

November 19, 2026
Washington, D.C.

Chairman Strong, Ranking Member Kennedy, and Members of the Subcommittee: Thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today regarding the Federal Emergency Management Agency's efforts to restore federalism to emergency management and strengthen our Nation's capacity to support disaster survivors and communities, advance national resilience, and ensure responsible stewardship of federal resources.

I am honored to serve under the leadership of President Donald J. Trump and Secretary Markwayne Mullin as we work to refocus FEMA on its core mission: helping people before, during, and after disasters by providing Federal assistance to supplement the efforts and available resources of affected state, localities, tribes, or territories. FEMA has a defined role in supporting disaster response and recovery when incidents truly exceed state, local, Tribal, or territorial capability. In those circumstances, as FEMA Administrator, I am committed to delivering auxiliary federal assistance quickly, competently, and accountably. Taxpayer dollars must be used consistent with the law and with great care and consideration.

Over time, FEMA has become overextended, bureaucratic, and inefficient. The agency has accumulated responsibilities that are not aligned with its core mission, and the Federal Government has too often been treated as the default financial backstop for incidents that are best managed at the state, local, Tribal, or territorial level.

This has resulted in delayed aid to Americans in genuine need, increased costs to taxpayers, weakened resilience, and state and local governments being discouraged from building capacity and proactively addressing their own risks.

GAO's decision to place federal disaster assistance on the High-Risk List confirms what this Administration has made clear: the current federal disaster assistance system is too fragmented, too slow, too expensive, and too difficult for survivors and communities to navigate. FEMA accepts the seriousness of that finding. We also see it as an opportunity to make long-overdue reforms that put Americans first, restore accountability, and return FEMA to its proper role.

President Donald J. Trump is restoring federalism. Under the President's leadership, FEMA is breaking the cycle of federal dependency, taking active steps to restore accountability: supporting states only when disasters truly exceed their capacity, radically simplifying recovery processes, safeguarding taxpayer dollars through common-sense reforms, and returning power to the American People.

You do not have to look further than the August flooding in Indiana for a prime example of state-led disaster recovery. After the flooding, I was on the ground with Governor Mike Braun and observed his leadership in action as he leveraged existing state assets for Indianans in need. FEMA was in constant contact with his team in real time during the flooding and when state resources were exhausted, President Trump granted federal disaster assistance. This is how FEMA was designed to work.

To support that model, FEMA's workforce must be organized around mission need, not bureaucracy. As Administrator, I am focused on ensuring FEMA has a right-sized, mission-focused, and deployable workforce, experienced leadership, and operational capability to support major disasters when they exceed state, local, Tribal, or territorial capacity.

FEMA maintains experienced leadership and staff across headquarters and our 10 regional offices. No office is without experienced leadership. Under my tenure, FEMA is directly aligned with President Trump's National Resilience Strategy. The strategy recognizes that resilience is not built by making the Federal Government the first or only answer to every disruption. Resilience is built by reducing risk, modernizing systems, distributing responsibility through federalism, and simplifying governance. Such America-First resilience promotes a peace-through-strength approach to national security, denying adversaries the ability to hold America and our core interests at risk.

Through the President's Executive Order on State and Local Preparedness and his National Resilience Strategy, this Administration is restoring federalism to emergency management, empowering states, industries, and Americans to take a more active role in addressing their own risks and managing their own preparedness to achieve readiness. We are refocusing the Agency on supporting states when disasters exceed their capacity, simplifying recovery processes, safeguarding taxpayer dollars through common-sense reforms, and improving the delivery of assistance to survivors and communities.

We must break the cycle of dependency on the Federal Government. Billions of dollars in federal assistance have supported state preparedness and mitigation, yet there are significant and persistent capability gaps and unaddressed risks. We cannot keep spending billions subsidizing inadequate preparedness or continuously paying to mitigate the same vulnerabilities, passing the bill—and the risk—to future generations. States must be prepared to manage routine, predictable, and recurring events, maintain a strong professional emergency management workforce and capability, invest in their own preparedness and mitigation, strengthen mutual aid, and make resilience the default and not the exception. FEMA supports those efforts through technical assistance, targeted grant investments, preparedness programs, mitigation support, and clear operational coordination, but long-term resilience depends on shared responsibility.

FEMA also supports continuity of government, consequence management, and national security missions, but continuity is not only a federal responsibility. State, local, tribal, and territorial governments must be able to maintain essential services and execute core functions during disruption. When done well, communities recover faster, cascading impacts are reduced, and FEMA can focus federal resources on the incidents that truly require national-level coordination and support.

I want to thank President Trump, Secretary Mullin, DHS, the whole FEMA team, and our federal partners who successfully executed the mission of public safety despite multiple government

shutdowns this year. They successfully ensured the safety and security of 2026 FIFA World Cup and Freedom 250 events throughout the country by working closely with state and local officials.

We are serving the American people, deepening our partnerships nationwide, and delivering America-First resilience. President Trump's vision is clear: stronger states make a more capable, ready, and resilient Nation. While FEMA is ready to meet current and future challenges, FEMA must be reformed in an immediate, commonsense, and lasting way.

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