

United States Senate

September 6, 2022

The Honorable Deanne Criswell
Administrator
Federal Emergency Management Agency
500 C Street, SW
Washington, DC 20472

Dear Administrator Criswell,

We write to inquire about FEMA's Individual Assistance approval process and to request any updates you can provide on changing the 2019 rule. When you appeared before the Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee on June 22, 2022, you testified that FEMA was reevaluating the criteria for FEMA Individual Assistance, and you offered to provide an update on the status of this analysis.

As you know, FEMA issued a Major Disaster Declaration for the Caldor Fire, which devastated the town of Grizzly Flats, California. Nearly 222,000 acres were burned in 69 days, and more than 1,000 structures, including 782 homes, were destroyed. However, despite the Caldor Fire destroying more homes than nine other disasters in 2021 combined, California's requests for FEMA Individual Assistance have been repeatedly denied.

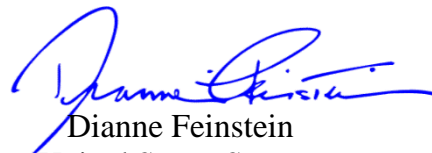
It is our understanding that this denial can be traced back to a rule FEMA established in 2019 to consider a state's total resources when determining whether to provide disaster assistance for individuals. California's Office of Emergency Services expressed its concerns with this rule during the comment period, including that it would leave survivors without much-needed aid and discriminate against large states, like California, that may need to provide state resources for numerous disasters simultaneously.

As you know, California and other Western states continue to face increasingly dangerous and extreme fire seasons. We appreciate your commitment to improving the FEMA Individual Assistance process, and we look forward to hearing the status of your review and working with you to provide more equitable federal disaster assistance for all survivors.

Sincerely,



Alex Padilla
United States Senator



Dianne Feinstein
United States Senator