United States Senate
WASHINGTON, DC 20510

January 13, 2021

The Honorable Joseph R. Biden, Jr.
President-elect
1401 Constitution Ave N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20230

Dear President-elect Biden:

We write to urge you to take immediate action upon assuming office to grant pending requests to waive the 25% non-federal cost share requirement for FEMA assistance related to the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic.

Notwithstanding the assistance provided under the CARES Act, the Consolidated Appropriations Act for Fiscal Year 2021, and other federal relief packages, state, local, and tribal governments continue to struggle to meet the fiscal challenges created by the COVID-19 pandemic. For this reason, most states and leading national organizations, including the National Governors Association, National Conference of State Legislatures, National League of Cities, National Association of Counties, the United States Conference of Mayors, and the Council of State Governments, have requested or supported relief from FEMA's cost share requirements.

We were heartened in recent weeks by your reaffirmation that you intend to provide 100% federal cost share for National Guard personnel who are operating under Title 32 mission assignments in response to the pandemic. That is an appropriate and welcome step for those states that have relied on the National Guard in this effort. It would be similarly appropriate to extend relief for all FEMA assistance provided in the course of the pandemic and to consider cost share relief for other federally declared disasters that occurred in 2020.

COVID-19 has upended life for many Americans, and state, local, and tribal governments have faced the dual challenges of unexpected costs and declining revenues. Increasing the federal cost share for FEMA assistance will give them the budgetary space to effectively respond to the ongoing health and economic hardship the pandemic has created.

As you know, only one official -- the President -- has the authority to increase the federal cost share for disaster assistance. Because the Trump Administration has so far ignored numerous requests for this relief, we request that you exercise that authority as expeditiously as possible once you are in a position to do so.

Thank you for your consideration and we look forward to working with you on this and other matters.

Sincerely,

Jack Reed
United States Senator

Charles E. Schumer
United States Senator

Gary C. Peters
United States Senator

Chris Van Hollen
United States Senator

Martin Heinrich
United States Senator

Jeanne Shaheen
United States Senator

Sheldon Whitehouse
United States Senator

/s/ Dianne Feinstein
Dianne Feinstein
United States Senator

Sherrod Brown
United States Senator

Chris Murphy
United States Senator

Tina Smith
United States Senator

Bernard Sanders
United States Senator

Jacky Rosen
United States Senator

Michael F. Bennet
United States Senator

Patrick Leahy
United States Senator

Catherine Cortez Masto
United States Senator

/s/ Brian Schatz
Brian Schatz
United States Senator

Tammy Baldwin
United States Senator

Christopher A. Coons
United States Senator

Patty Murray
United States Senator

Richard Blumenthal
United States Senator

Ron Wyden
United States Senator

Benjamin L. Cardin
United States Senator

Thomas R. Carper
United States Senator

Tammy Duckworth
United States Senator

Richard J. Durbin
United States Senator

/s/ Robert Menendez
Robert Menendez
United States Senator

Amy Klobuchar
United States Senator

Maria Cantwell
United States Senator

Ben Ray Luján
United States Senator

Angus S. King, Jr.
United States Senator

/s/ Cory A. Booker
Cory A. Booker
United States Senator

/s/ Elizabeth Warren
Elizabeth Warren
United States Senator

/s/ Edward J. Markey
Edward J. Markey
United States Senator