United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

April 27, 2018

The Honorable Shelley Moore Capito
Chairman
Appropriations Subcommittee on
Homeland Security
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Jon Tester
Ranking Member
Appropriations Subcommittee on
Homeland Security
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Capito and Ranking Member Tester:

Thank you for your strong support of programs that reduce potential losses from flooding and other major disasters. As you develop the FY 2019 Department of Homeland Security Appropriations bill, we urge you to provide no less than $400 million for the Flood Hazard Mapping and Risk Analysis program, no less than $250 million for the Pre-Disaster Mitigation (PDM) program, and $175 million for the Flood Mitigation Assistance (FMA) program.

The investments that you included for flood mapping and mitigation programs in the Fiscal Year 2018 Consolidated Appropriations Act are smart ways to help reduce the devastation that Americans in Puerto Rico, Florida, Texas, and the U.S. Virgin Islands experienced in 2017. Regrettably, we are experiencing major disasters with increasing frequency. The Pew Charitable Trusts report that major flooding disasters (those with damage of $1 billion or more) have caused more than $750 billion in losses since 2000, making floods the most destructive, costly, and common natural disaster.

These three FEMA proactive mitigation initiatives play a vital role in helping communities prepare for and lessen the damage from floods and other natural disasters. And by stepping in before disasters occur, these initiatives contribute to sound fiscal policy, strengthen the solvency of the National Flood Insurance Program, and reduce FEMA and other disaster assistance program costs.

The Flood Hazard Mapping and Risk Analysis program supports the functions necessary to develop and keep current the flood risk information and flood maps that are used for the National Flood Insurance Program. However, FEMA's flood maps and related products are more than just tools for establishing flood insurance premiums. As the Government Accountability Office noted in 2010, state and local governments, emergency managers, land developers, and engineers use these maps as a planning tool to protect properties and communities from flooding. And FEMA has estimated that local governments save $1 billion annually in avoided flood damage by using up-to-date flood maps to make informed decisions about development.

The PDM program provides grants to states, communities, territories, and tribal governments for mitigation planning for floods and other hazards and projects to address discovered vulnerabilities before a disaster strikes. According to the Congressional Budget

Office, every dollar spent overall on the PDM program saves $3 in future government spending on disaster assistance. PDM grants specifically for flood mitigation are even more cost-effective, saving taxpayers $4.5 for every dollar spent.

Finally, the FMA program supports the acquisition and demolition of flood prone structures through voluntary buyouts, elevation of homes above expected flood levels, and construction of minor drainage projects that reduce the impact of storms.

Taken together, these programs offer cost-effective approaches to reducing flood risk, preventing future damage, and strengthening the National Flood Insurance Program's solvency. By funding these programs at the requested levels, we can help protect homeowners and communities across the country from disaster-related damage, reduce future risk, and reduce the cost of recovery after a disaster occurs.

Thank you for your consideration of this request, and we look forward to working with you on this important matter.

Sincerely,

Jack Reed
U.S. Senator

Bill Cassidy, M.D.
U.S. Senator

Robert Menendez
U.S. Senator

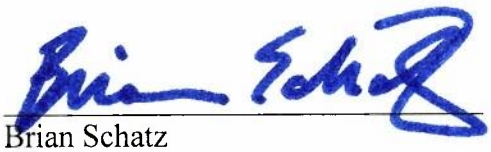
Sherrod Brown
U.S. Senator

Sheldon Whitehouse
U.S. Senator

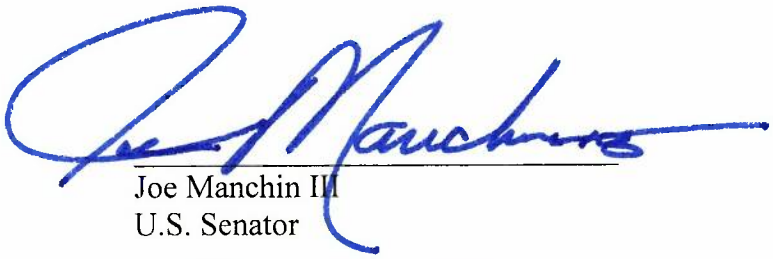
Robert P. Casey, Jr.
U.S. Senator

Kirsten Gillibrand
U.S. Senator

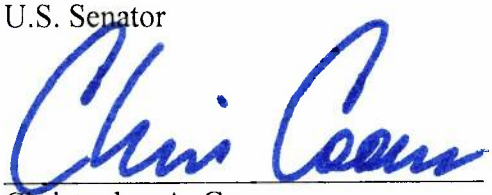
Thomas R. Carper
U.S. Senator



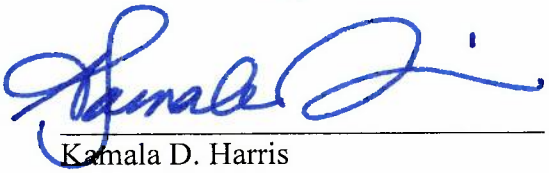
Brian Schatz
U.S. Senator



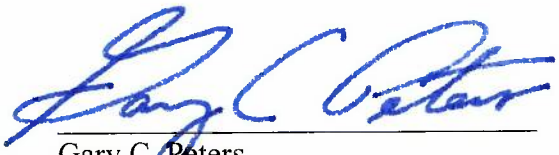
Joe Manchin III
U.S. Senator



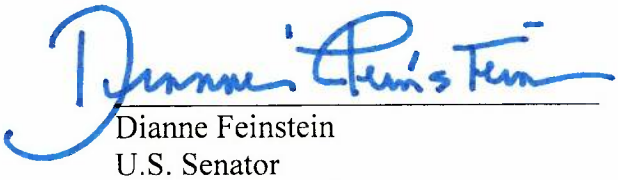
Christopher A. Coons
U.S. Senator



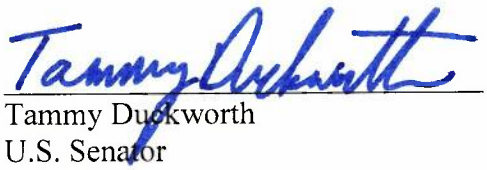
Kamala D. Harris
U.S. Senator



Gary C. Peters
U.S. Senator

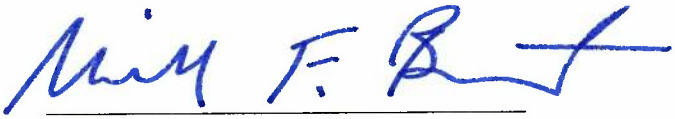


Dianne Feinstein
U.S. Senator



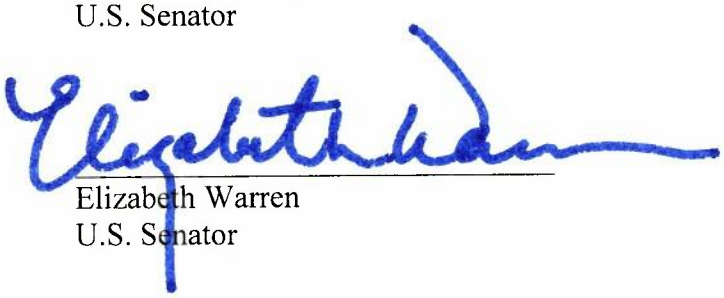
Tammy Duckworth
U.S. Senator

Tammy Baldwin
U.S. Senator



Michael F. Bennet
U.S. Senator

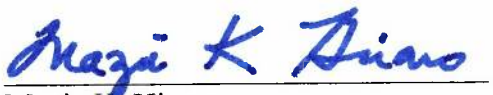
Richard Blumenthal
U.S. Senator



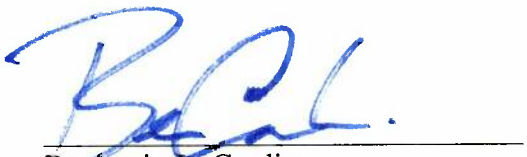
Elizabeth Warren
U.S. Senator

Catherine Cortez Masto
U.S. Senator

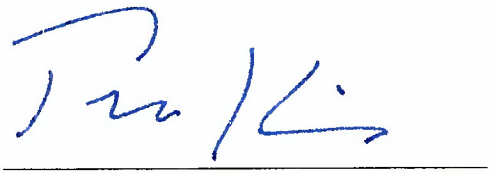
Bernard Sanders
U.S. Senator



Mazie K. Hirono
U.S. Senator

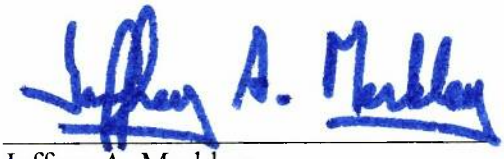


Benjamin L. Cardin
U.S. Senator



Tim Kaine
U.S. Senator

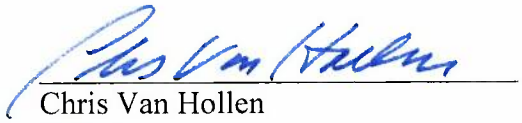
Ron Wyden
U.S. Senator



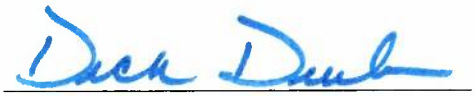
Jeffrey A. Merkley
U.S. Senator

Mark R. Warner
U.S. Senator

Maria Cantwell
U.S. Senator



Chris Van Hollen
U.S. Senator



Richard J. Durbin
U.S. Senator