

# Congress of the United States

## Washington, DC 20515

March 26, 2024

President Joe Biden  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW  
Washington, D.C. 20500

Lori Ehrlich  
Regional Administrator  
Federal Emergency Management Agency, Region 1  
220 Binney Street  
Cambridge, MA 02142

Dear President Biden and Administrator Ehrlich,

We write in support of Governor Healey's formal appeal of Massachusetts' major disaster declaration request denial, submitted on March 11, 2024 under the provisions of Section 401 of the *Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act*. The major disaster declaration request was made in response to the catastrophic flooding in Bristol, Hampden, and Worcester Counties after historic rainfall in September 2023.<sup>1</sup> We urge you to carefully consider the Commonwealth's formal appeal and help us deliver the aid that our residents desperately need.

We are appreciative of FEMA's partnership with our delegation and with first responders and state and local officials in the response to this disaster. Recognizing that the flooding has strained finances, time, and resources for some of our most vulnerable communities in Massachusetts<sup>2</sup>, we echo the Governor's interest in appealing certain identified costs that FEMA excluded from its initial assessment of Massachusetts' request.

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<sup>1</sup> Western Mass News, "Gov. Healey seeks federal disaster declaration following September storms," Morgan Briggs and Ryan Trowbridge, December 13, 2023, <https://www.westernmassnews.com/2023/12/13/gov-healey-seeks-federal-disaster-declaration-following-september-storms/>.

<sup>2</sup> Letter from Governor Maura Healey to President Joe Biden and FEMA Regional Administrator Lori Ehrlich, March 11, 2024, p. 2, On file with Sen. Warren's office.

As the Governor's letter explains, the City of Springfield experienced a disastrous water main break.<sup>3</sup> Although the City provided substantial documentation addressing the necessary repair and debris removal costs associated with the water break, FEMA excluded significant portions of those costs in their eligibility determinations.<sup>4</sup> Additionally, the City of Leominster submitted a list of 56 damaged sites in the preliminary damage assessment (PDA) process,<sup>5</sup> but FEMA only provided documented validation for seven of the sites.<sup>6</sup> Similarly, while MassDOT submitted cost estimates as part of the PDA, FEMA excluded all work on Federal Highway-eligible roads, including emergency work.<sup>7</sup> We hope that these expenses, in addition to the other costs and considerations raised by the Governor, will have the chance for further review as part of FEMA's evaluation of Massachusetts' major disaster request appeal.

As climate change continues to bring unprecedented weather changes, we believe it is imperative that communities see strong partnership among federal, state, and local governments to deliver when residents need it most. Therefore, we strongly support Governor Healey's formal appeal and respectfully ask you to reconsider FEMA's decision. On behalf of the communities affected, we thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,



Elizabeth Warren  
United States Senator



Edward J. Markey  
United States Senator



Richard E. Neal  
Member of Congress



James P. McGovern  
Member of Congress



Lori Trahan  
Member of Congress



Jake Auchinloss  
Member of Congress

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<sup>3</sup> *Id.*

<sup>4</sup> *Id.*

<sup>5</sup> Letter from Governor Maura Healey to President Joe Biden and FEMA Regional Administrator Lori Ehrlich, March 11, 2024, p. 4, On file with Sen. Warren's office.

<sup>6</sup> *Id.*

<sup>7</sup> Letter from Governor Maura Healey to President Joe Biden and FEMA Regional Administrator Lori Ehrlich, March 11, 2024, p. 3, On file with Sen. Warren's office.