

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

January 26, 2024

The Honorable Joseph R. Biden, Jr.
President of the United States
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear Mr. President:

We write today in support of Governor Shapiro's appeal to the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) regarding its December 2023 decision to deny Public Assistance to Lackawanna, Luzerne, and Wyoming Counties following serious flooding in Northeastern Pennsylvania on September 9, 2023. Following the flooding, Governor Shapiro requested the major disaster declaration, specifically asking that Individual Assistance be authorized for Lackawanna County and that Public Assistance, which provides relief to public entities for certain emergency services and the repair or replacement of disaster damaged facilities, be authorized for Lackawanna, Luzerne, and Wyoming Counties. We want to reiterate that the damage to local infrastructure was severe and ask that you evaluate the Pennsylvania Emergency Management Administration's (PEMA) more recent damage assessments, which clearly demonstrate the need for federal support in Lackawanna, Luzerne, and Wyoming.

It is our understanding that PEMA has identified greater costs from the storm that had not been accounted for in data used by FEMA to make its initial decision. While costs validated by FEMA at the close of the Joint Preliminary Damage Assessment (JPDA) were \$12,953,212, PEMA's updated estimates found an additional \$11,896,393.06 that had not been considered in the JPDA. This would put the PEMA validated total damages at \$24,849,605.06, above the per capita threshold required to qualify for Public Assistance. This damage exceeds the capacity of the impacted local governments' recovery capabilities if federal assistance is not provided, especially when the high concentration of damages is considered. These new estimates demonstrate that it is critical for FEMA to reevaluate Governor Shapiro's request for Public Assistance funding.

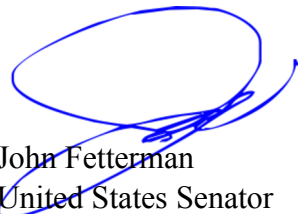
As stated in our previous letter, we also recognize that a robust recovery will require funding from many sources. However, we would like to reiterate that those dollars should be a complement to rather than a replacement for the FEMA resources dedicated for recovery assistance.

The communities in Northeastern Pennsylvania continue to express their need for support and we need to respond with federal assistance. We urge you to reevaluate the request for Public Assistance and approve Governor Shapiro's current major disaster declaration request. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Robert P. Casey, Jr.
United States Senator



John Fetterman
United States Senator



Matt Cartwright
Member of Congress