



One Hundred Eighteenth Congress
Committee on Homeland Security
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

October 11, 2024

The Honorable Alejandro Mayorkas
Secretary
U.S. Department of Homeland Security
Washington, D.C. 20528

Dear Secretary Mayorkas:

The Committee on Homeland Security (Committee) is investigating the Department of Homeland Security's (Department) prioritization of its ability to adequately respond to natural disasters. Last week, you stated to media reporters that the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) "does not have the funds, to make it through the [hurricane] season."¹ If true, FEMA's funding shortfall is extremely disconcerting as Americans impacted by Hurricane Helene and potentially by Hurricane Milton face dire circumstances while the Biden-Harris administration may have unwisely and irresponsibly focused funding requests for other FEMA activities.

FEMA operates the Disaster Relief Fund (DRF), the federal government's primary fund for disaster relief activities.² Throughout the Biden-Harris administration, Congress consistently met or exceeded, through supplemental appropriations, the President's budget requests for disaster relief.³ In fiscal year (FY) 2023 and FY2024, Congress appropriated approximately \$61.2 billion for the DRF through a combination of both annual and supplemental appropriations.⁴ The Committee, however, is troubled that the Department and FEMA may not have properly apprised Congress of its need for additional disaster relief funds while simultaneously requesting large sums of monies to fund FEMA's Shelter and Services Program (SSP), a grant program to fund nonfederal entities for shelter and services provided to migrants encountered by the Department, including illegal aliens.⁵

¹ Zachary Montague, *Mayorkas Warns of Funding Shortfall for Rest of Hurricane Season*, THE N.Y. TIMES, Oct. 2, 2024, <https://www.nytimes.com/2024/10/02/us/politics/fema-funding-shortfall-hurricane-season.html>.

² CONG. RESEARCH SERV., R47676, DISASTER RELIEF FUND STATE OF PLAY 2 (Updated Aug. 13, 2024).

³ See CONG. RESEARCH SERV., R46978, COMPARING DHS COMPONENT FUNDING, FY2022: IN BRIEF 9 (Updated Mar. 18, 2022); CONG. RESEARCH SERV., R47220, COMPARING DHS COMPONENT FUNDING, FY2023: IN BRIEF 8 (Updated Jan. 10, 2023); CONG. RESEARCH SERV., R47678, COMPARING DHS COMPONENT FUNDING, FY2024: IN BRIEF 6 (May 3, 2024); CONG. RESEARCH SERV., R48115, COMPARING DHS COMPONENT FUNDING, FY2025: IN BRIEF 5 (Jun. 28, 2024).

⁴ U.S. GOV'T ACCOUNTABILITY OFFICE, GAO-24-106676, DISASTER RELIEF FUND: LESSONS LEARNED FROM COVID-19 COULD IMPROVE FEMA'S ESTIMATES 2 (2024).

⁵ *Shelter and Services Program*, FED. EMERGENCY MGMT. AGENCY, <https://www.fema.gov/grants/shelter-services-program>. (last visited Oct. 7, 2024).

In FY2023, Congress authorized the SSP to replace FEMA’s Emergency Food and Shelter Program-Humanitarian Relief (EFSP-H).⁶ Prior to FY2023, FEMA never received more than \$150 million to fund migrant services,⁷ but in FY2023 and FY2024 FEMA disbursed more than \$1.4 billion through grants to states and localities to pay for migrant sheltering and services.⁸ In FY2024, FEMA awarded at least \$300 million in SSP grants through non-competitive processes,⁹ despite a March 2023 Department of Homeland Security Inspector General (DHS OIG) report finding that “FEMA did not provide sufficient oversight” of how these funds were used under the EFSP-H program.¹⁰ Meanwhile, \$344 million, an only slightly greater amount, has been spent on federal assistance for the communities impacted by Hurricane Helene.¹¹

According to analysts, Hurricane Helene caused up to \$47.5 billion in damages to Americans across 16 states.¹² The recovery for these communities will take years and possibly even decades. While the Committee understands that there is no intermingling of funds between the DRF and SSP, the Department’s priorities for limited resources provided by taxpayers to the Department should first and foremost serve Americans.

To assist the Committee with its investigation of the Department’s allocation of funds for natural disaster response, relief, and recovery, please provide the following documents and information as soon as possible, but no later than 5:00 p.m. on October 25, 2024:

1. All documents and communications between or among any FEMA, Department, and Executive Office of the President employees or contractors, including but not limited to, e-mail, text messages, internal memoranda, and guidance, referring or relating to the prioritization of funding for the Shelter and Services Program or Emergency Food and Shelter Program-Humanitarian Relief, from October 1, 2022 to the present;

⁶ P.L. 117-328, Div. F, Title II.

⁷ See P.L. 117-103, Div. F, Title V.

⁸ CONG. RESEARCH SERV., IN12177, SHELTER AND SERVICES PROGRAM (SSP) FY2023 FUNDING 1 (Updated Aug. 30, 2023); Press Release, U.S. Dep’t of Homeland Sec., Department of Homeland Security Announces Distribution of More than \$77 million in Congressional Funding for Communities Receiving Migrants (Aug. 21, 2023) (on file with author); Press Release, Fed. Emergency Mgmt. Agency, Shelter and Services program – Allocated FY24 Awards (Last updated Sep. 3, 2024) (on file with author).

⁹ *Fiscal Year (FY) 2024 Shelter and Services Program – Allocated (SSP-A) Fact Sheet*, FED. EMERGENCY MGMT. AGENCY, <https://www.fema.gov/grants/shelter-services-program/ssp-a/fy-24-fact-sheet> (last visited Oct. 7, 2024).

¹⁰ DEP’T OF HOMELAND SEC. OFF. OF THE INSPECTOR GEN., OIG-23-20, FEMA SHOULD INCREASE OVERSIGHT TO PREVENT MISUSE OF HUMANITARIAN RELIEF FUNDS 3 (2023).

¹¹ Press Release, Fed. Emergency Mgmt. Agency, Federal Assistance for Hurricane Helene Exceeds \$344 Million as FEMA Expands Dual Response Efforts as Hurricane Milton Forecast to Make Landfall This Evening, (Oct. 9, 2024) available at <https://www.fema.gov/press-release/20241009/federal-assistance-hurricane-helene-exceeds-344-million-fema-expands-dual> (last visited Oct. 11, 2024).

¹² Matt Egan, *As Hurricane Milton threatens the US, Helene could cost property owners more than \$47 billion*, CNN, Oct. 7, 2024, <https://www.cnn.com/2024/10/07/business/property-damage-hurricane-helene-47-billion/index.html>.

2. All documents and communications between or among any FEMA, Department, and Executive Office of the President employees or contractors, including but not limited to, e-mail, text messages, internal memoranda, and guidance, referring or relating to the funding of the Disaster Relief Fund from October 1, 2022 to the present; and
3. Documents sufficient to identify each entity that has received a Shelter and Services Program or Emergency Food and Shelter Program-Humanitarian Relief grant since October 1, 2022.

An attachment contains instructions for responding to this request. Please contact the Committee on Homeland Security Majority staff at (202) 226-8417 with any questions about this request.

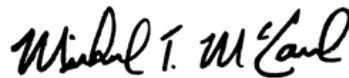
Per Rule X of the U.S House of Representatives, the Committee on Homeland Security is the principal committee of jurisdiction for overall homeland security policy, and has special oversight functions of “all Government activities relating to homeland security, including the interaction of all departments and agencies with the Department of Homeland Security.”

Thank you for your prompt attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,



MARK E. GREEN, MD
Chairman
Committee on Homeland Security



MICHAEL T. MCCAUL
Chairman
Committee on Foreign Affairs



CLAY HIGGINS
Chairman
Subcommittee on Border
Security and Enforcement



MICHAEL GUEST
Vice Chairman
Committee on Homeland Security



DAN BISHOP
Chairman
Subcommittee on Oversight,
Investigations, and Accountability



AUGUST PFLUGER
Chairman
Subcommittee on Counterterrorism,
Law Enforcement, and Intelligence

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Member of Congress



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JOSH BRECHEEN
Member of Congress



ELI CRANE
Member of Congress

cc: The Honorable Bennie Thompson, Ranking Member
Committee on Homeland Security

The Honorable Lou Correa, Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Border Security and Enforcement

The Honorable Glenn Ivey, Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Oversight, Investigations, and Accountability

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The Honorable Seth Magaziner, Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Counterterrorism, Law Enforcement, and Intelligence

The Honorable Troy Carter, Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Emergency Management and Technology