

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-3203

March 21, 2020

The Honorable Donald J. Trump  
President of the United States  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW  
Washington, DC 20500

Dear President Trump:

We write today to thank you for granting New York the nation's first Major Disaster Declaration (MDD) in response to the coronavirus 2019 (COVID-19) outbreak, and we urge you to approve the Public Assistance, Individual Assistance, and Hazard Mitigation still listed as under review by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) announcement. New York is the epicenter of the COVID-19 outbreak and it is imperative we provide New York State with all the assistance requested during these critical hours.

The Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act, 42 U.S.C. §§ 5121-5207 (the Stafford Act) authorizes the president to grant a MDD for any natural catastrophe that the president determines has caused damage of sufficient severity and magnitude. On March 20, the president granted the nation's first MDD in response to the COVID-19 outbreak right here in New York.

This MDD provides two categories of aid, Public Assistance through the Category B – Emergency Protective Measures, and Individual Assistance in the form of Crisis Counselling. While this is an important step in helping New York combat the COVID-19 outbreak, New York State also requested access to additional Public Assistance, Individual Assistance, and Hazard Mitigation in its MDD request.

Specifically, New York requested access to Public Assistance Category A – Debris Removal to provide funding for the removal of consumable waste related to mobile testing sites, and to assist localities if interruptions to regular sanitation services or other solid waste disposal activities become an issue. Additionally, New York State also requested Individual Assistance with access to the Individuals and Households Program, Disaster Unemployment Assistance, and the Disaster Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (D-SNAP). The Individuals and Households Program would allow FEMA to provide many types of assistance including: Financial Housing Assistance, Direct Housing Assistance, Medical Assistance, and Child Care Assistance to New York.

Furthermore, Disaster Unemployment Assistance would allow FEMA to provide unemployment benefits and re-employment services to New Yorkers, something that is deeply needed as the economic impacts of this outbreak continue to grow.

Finally, D-SNAP is mentioned in the state's request and granting it would allow the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) to provide temporary food assistance for households affected by this outbreak and is available to anyone who was living in the impacted area at the time of the disaster.

New York State also requested Hazard Mitigation assistance. All of these programs are necessary to save lives and protect health and public safety in New York and we urge you to expeditiously approve this assistance.

As of March 20, the New York Department of Health reported over 7,000 COVID-19 cases across New York, including: 4,408 in New York City, 1,091 in Westchester County, 754 cases in Nassau County, 371 in Suffolk County, 101 in Rockland County, 84 in Orange County, 61 in Albany County, 36 in Dutchess County, 32 in Monroe County, 31 in Erie County, 24 in Saratoga County, 21 in Schenectady County, 12 in Ulster County, 8 in Sullivan County, 8 in Rensselaer County, 8 in Onondaga County, 7 in Tompkins County, 7 in Putnam County, 3 in Ontario County, 3 in Niagara County, 2 in Wyoming County, 2 in Oneida County, 2 in Montgomery County, 2 in Herkimer County, 2 in Hamilton County, 2 in Greene County, 2 in Clinton County, 2 in Chenango County, 2 in Broome County, 2 in Allegany County, 1 in Wayne County, 1 in Washington County, 1 in Warren County, 1 in Tioga County, 1 in Schoharie County, 1 in Livingston County, 1 in Jefferson County, and one in Genesee County. New York is the national epicenter for the COVID-19 outbreak and while the immediate health risk to the majority of New Yorkers is thought to remain low, the crippling impact on the state warrants immediate and comprehensive federal support. New York State and local officials are working hard to mitigate the outbreak and protect New Yorkers and ongoing federal resources are badly needed to support those efforts.

Again, thank you for granting the MDD for New York in the wake of the COVID-19 outbreak. While this is an important step in helping New York combat this virus, we urge you to expeditiously grant the remaining assistance requested by New York to ensure this state at the epicenter of the outbreak has access to all the resources the federal government can provide.

Thank you for your time and attention to this matter, if you have questions please do not hesitate to contact our staff.

Sincerely,



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Charles E. Schumer  
United States Senator



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Kirsten Gillibrand  
United States Senator

CC:

The Honorable Mike Pence, Vice President of the United States of America  
The Honorable Peter Gaynor, Administrator of the US Federal Emergency Management Agency  
The Honorable Thomas Von Essen, Regional Administrator of FEMA Region 2  
The Honorable Andrew Cuomo, Governor of New York State