

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

September 22, 2026

The Honorable Cameron Hamilton
Administrator
Federal Emergency Management Agency
500 C Street NW
Washington, DC 20472

Dear Administrator Hamilton

We write to express our deep opposition to the Federal Emergency Management Agency's (FEMA) second denial of Governor Hochul's request for a Major Disaster Declaration in the wake of the February blizzard that brought record snowfall, strong wind that caused whiteout conditions, and minor coastal flooding to southern New York. It is unacceptable for FEMA and this administration to play politics when it comes to natural disasters.

On March 25, 2026, Governor Hochul first requested a Major Disaster Declaration for the severe winter storm and snowstorm that occurred February 22-23, 2026. This request included Public Assistance (PA) for Queens, Nassau, and Suffolk County, and Snow Assistance for Bronx, Kings, Nassau, New York, Queens, Richmond, Suffolk, and Westchester Counties, and Hazard Mitigation for the entire State.

On July 2, 2026, FEMA denied the request without providing any reasoning. Reporting reveals that the regional offices at FEMA and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) determined that the February blizzard met the threshold and standards for a disaster declaration for a record-breaking snowstorm. Disturbingly, the same reporting shows that President Trump chose to overrule the findings of his own agencies, in a move that only be described as political.¹

On July 30, 2026, Governor Hochul appealed the denial, fully detailing how the state's request for a Major Disaster Declaration was warranted and how the February blizzard met all the thresholds and standards set by the federal government. Once again, on September 2, 2026, FEMA denied the Governor's appeal and request for a disaster declaration without providing any reasoning or explanation.

President Trump and this administration have the wrong priorities. Since taking office in his second term, President Trump has disproportionately denied or delayed approval of requests for federal disaster aid from states led by Democrats. Instead of helping all Americans to recover from record-breaking natural disasters, it is clear the President is turning his back to the millions of hard-working New Yorkers.

¹ <https://www.politico.com/news/2026/07/29/fema-democratic-disaster-requests-trump-01013938>

We are grateful for the prompt attention that the federal government has historically shown New York State after the impacts of disasters. However, we remain incredibly concerned by the administration's blatant political weaponization of federal disaster assistance. We request that you provide FEMA's full analysis and reasoning for denying Governor Hochul's initial request for a Major Disaster Declaration as well as the full analysis and reasoning for denying the Governor's appeal by October 5, 2026. Thank you for your attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,



Kirsten Gillibrand
United States Senator



Charles E. Schumer
United States Senator