

United States Senate  
WASHINGTON, DC 20510

March 6, 2025

Mr. Cameron Hamilton  
Senior Official Performing the Duties of FEMA Administrator  
Federal Emergency Management Agency  
500 C Street SW  
Washington, D.C. 20024

Dear Mr. Hamilton,

We write to follow up on our unanswered inquiry dated February 14, 2025, about the “Department of Government Efficiency’s” (DOGE) reported access to sensitive disaster victim data.<sup>1</sup> Recent reports that the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) has fired hundreds of personnel and frozen certain grants have deepened our concerns about FEMA’s capacity to quickly respond to disasters and help communities prepare for future disasters.<sup>2</sup>

Our constituents—rebuilding from severe flooding in Vermont, Minnesota, Connecticut, and Massachusetts, as well as catastrophic wildfires in Hawai’i, New Mexico, Oregon, and California—have experienced first-hand the shortcomings of the federal approach to disaster resilience and recovery. Instead of addressing their needs and concerns, the Trump Administration has taken a sledgehammer to the foundation of FEMA. We agree FEMA needs fixing, but effective reform requires thoughtful and precise solutions, not brute force and arbitrary terminations.

Last month, FEMA fired over 200 probationary employees, including new hires and those recently promoted, despite longstanding and severe staffing shortages.<sup>3</sup> The Administration claims only “non-mission critical” personnel were impacted by the firings. However, we have yet to receive any evidence to support that assertion. Instead, reporting indicates that these firings will undermine federal disaster response and hamper FEMA’s ability to provide critical support to our constituents.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Letter from Sen. Peter Welch, Sen. Alex Padilla, Sen. Mazie Hirono, Sen. Chris Van Hollen, Sen. Adam B. Schiff, Sen. Martin Heinrich, Sen. Richard Blumenthal, Sen. Edward J. Markey, Sen. Bernard Sanders, Sen. Ron Wyden, Sen. Jeffrey A. Merkley, and Sen. Amy Klobuchar to Acting Administrator Cameron Hamilton, Federal Emergency Agency (Feb. 14, 2025) (online at <https://www.welch.senate.gov/welch-padilla-lead-colleagues-from-disaster-impacted-states-in-demanding-answers-about-elon-musk-and-doges-access-to-disaster-victims-personal-data/>).

<sup>2</sup> *Trump Administration Fires Over 400 DHS Employees as Mass Firings Continue*, Columbia Broadcasting System (Feb. 16, 2025) (online at <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/trump-administration-fires-over-400-dhs-employees/>).

<sup>3</sup> Government Accountability Office, *Opportunities Exist to Address Mission Challenges and Increased Workload* (Mar. 12, 2024) (GAO-24-107351) (online at <https://www.gao.gov/assets/d24107351.pdf>); *Trump Administration Fires Over 400 DHS Employees as Mass Firings Continue*, Columbia Broadcasting System (Feb. 16, 2025) (online at <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/trump-administration-fires-over-400-dhs-employees/>).

<sup>4</sup> *What the Firings at FEMA Could Mean for the Next Hurricane or Wildfire*, National Public Radio (Feb. 21, 2025) (online at <https://www.npr.org/2025/02/21/nx-s1-5301064/trump-fema-layoffs-disasters-hurricanes>).

The Administration is now reportedly planning to fire even more FEMA employees.<sup>5</sup> We know every \$1 spent on disaster resilience and preparedness ultimately saves the country \$13.<sup>6</sup> Mass firings at FEMA will almost certainly delay the implementation of these cost-saving resiliency measures—at the expense of the American taxpayer and disaster-impacted communities.

In addition to mass firings, stakeholders have informed us that the Administration has suspended disbursement of certain FEMA grants. In Vermont, a federal subrecipient received notice that it could not access its Next Generation Warning System grant to modernize aging broadcast equipment and emergency alert systems. Moreover, in Oregon, a local health care provider has been unable to move forward with a multi-million-dollar project essential for enhancing emergency response capabilities and capacity due to the agency-wide communications freeze. These apparent freezes have left frontline organizations in limbo and our communities in jeopardy.

The Administration's destructive approach will not assist the disaster-impacted communities across the country hoping to rebuild and move forward. To the contrary, it will leave the nation more vulnerable to future disasters and less prepared to pick up the pieces when the dust settles.

To keep our communities safe, we request a prompt response to the questions posed in our prior letter, referenced above, as well as responses to the following questions no later than March 31, 2025:

1. Under what authority has FEMA fired individuals between January 20, 2025, and March 5, 2025?
  - a. What procedures did FEMA follow to evaluate the performance of those individuals prior to termination?
  - b. What procedures did it follow to evaluate the impact of each firing on the overall performance of FEMA operations?
2. From what positions has FEMA fired individuals between January 20, 2025, and March 5, 2025? Please provide a complete list of impacted positions and the associated duties of each position.
3. How many grant programs has FEMA frozen for any duration of time between January 20, 2025, and March 5, 2025?
  - a. Please list the frozen grant programs. Of those, how many remain frozen?
  - b. How many individual recipients have had their funding frozen, disaggregated by each program?

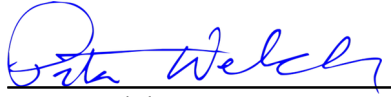
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<sup>5</sup> *FEMA Email: Firings Will Affect 'Majority of Our Staff'*, Politico (Feb. 19, 2025) (online at <https://www.politico.com/news/2025/02/19/fema-email-firings-affect-majority-staff-00204779>).

<sup>6</sup> U.S. Chamber of Commerce, Allstate, and U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation, *The Preparedness Payoff: The Economic Benefits of Investing in Climate Resilience* (June 25, 2024) (online at <https://www.uschamber.com/security/the-preparedness-payoff-the-economic-benefits-of-investing-in-climate-resilience>).

- c. What evaluations, if any, has FEMA conducted to review the impact of these frozen disbursements on disaster-impacted communities? Please provide detailed accounting of the results of these evaluations.

Sincerely,



Peter Welch  
United States Senator



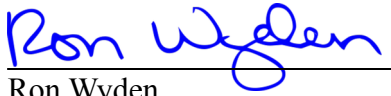
Alex Padilla  
United States Senator



Bernard Sanders  
United States Senator



Jeffrey A. Merkley  
United States Senator



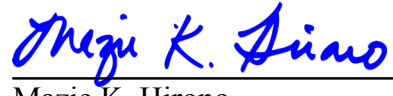
Ron Wyden  
United States Senator



Richard Blumenthal  
United States Senator



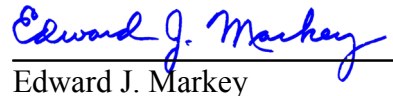
Adam B. Schiff  
United States Senator



Mazie K. Hirono  
United States Senator



Amy Klobuchar  
United States Senator



Edward J. Markey  
United States Senator



Chris Van Hollen  
United States Senator