

**Congress of the United States**  
**Washington, DC 20515**

November 7, 2018

The Honorable Richard Shelby  
Chairman  
Committee on Appropriations  
United States Senate  
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Patrick Leahy  
Vice Chairman  
Committee on Appropriations  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Rodney Frelinghuysen  
Chairman  
Committee on Appropriations  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Nita Lowey  
Ranking Member  
Committee on Appropriations  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Shelby, Chairman Frelinghuysen, Vice Chairman Leahy, and Ranking Member Lowey:

The state of Hawai'i has experienced four presidentially-declared disasters across multiple islands in 2018 – severe storms, flooding, landslides, and mudslides in April; the Kilauea volcanic eruptions and earthquakes; Hurricane Lane; and Tropical Storm Olivia. Across Hawai'i, homes, businesses, public infrastructure, agricultural lands, tourist attractions, and more were either damaged, destroyed, or made inaccessible. The destruction disrupted the lives of thousands in some of our most vulnerable communities and will have a long-lasting ripple effect on Hawai'i's economy, likely resulting in losses in the hundreds of millions of dollars, especially for our tourism and agricultural industries.

The continuous state of response and recovery has placed unique strain on our communities and resources. For example, the County of Hawai'i actively managed the three-month volcanic eruption disaster while preparing for and responding to multiple severe storm events. To further demonstrate the local impact Hawai'i's disasters had on our communities, we are enclosing letters sent by Hawai'i's Governor David Ige to the administration regarding each disaster.

As you consider disaster relief and recovery funding for this year's disasters, the Hawai'i congressional delegation requests the following appropriations to key disaster accounts, such as the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's (HUD) Community Development Block Grant – Disaster Recovery (CDBG-DR) program, and to increase accessibility of other programs for Hawai'i's agricultural producers, such as the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP).

## **REQUESTS**

To address the collective impacts of the four disasters our state has faced, we request the following:

### **1. HUD – CDBG-DR**

**REQUEST: \$400 million**

We request these funds to ensure recovery for low and moderate income households impacted by this year's disasters, and request flexibility in the allocation of these funds given the state's particular relationship with CDBG. Hawai'i County, in particular, faces the daunting task of rebuilding and replacing entire communities and economic livelihoods lost to the volcanic eruption, lava, and gases. Some unique challenges created by the volcanic eruption include:

- Over 8,000 acres of lava inundation covering entire neighborhoods, farms, a school, cultural sites, recreational destinations, roadways, water systems, and large portions of the electrical grid;
- The on-going volatility of the disaster rendering portions of the community inaccessible and limiting the ability to properly assess recovery costs;
- The destruction of more than 700 homes totaling over \$100 million in property losses and \$5 million in losses from annual real property tax revenue;
- A 38MW geothermal plant shutting down and being isolated by lava, resulting in the loss of one-third of Hawai'i County's power production and one-half of its renewable energy portfolio; and
- A radius of volcano-generated gases and glass negatively impacting plant, animal, and human health miles away from the eruption.

CDBG-DR funds would underwrite the vital tasks of redeveloping impacted areas to address the need for affordable housing for displaced households.

Kaua'i County has also suffered significant harm from both the severe flooding in April and rainfall from Hurricane Lane. These major weather events disrupted the economy of the greater Hanalei region on Kaua'i's north shore, and CDBG-DR funding would help to ensure the re-establishment of the community while supporting its low and moderate income households as they continue their livelihoods.

### **2. USDA – NAP/WHIP**

**REQUEST: \$52.7 million + Bill Language (enclosed)**

Hawai'i's agricultural producers have suffered significantly from this year's disasters. The eruption of Kīlauea destroyed some of Hawai'i's most productive growing areas, and cut off access and infrastructure to others. Fumes extending miles away from the eruption impaired productivity for a variety of producers by damaging delicate nursery and floriculture crops.

In addition, we request your consideration of bill language, which is similar to relief that was provided to producers impacted by 2017 hurricanes and wildfires, to ensure that the unique impact of the Kīlauea eruption on Hawai'i's producers are considered so they are able to receive the full benefit from this funding.

**3. USDA – Emergency Conservation Program**  
**REQUEST: \$42 million + Bill Language (enclosed)**

Lava has forced the relocation of crops, such as papaya, and we request your assistance to ensure that the USDA's Emergency Conservation Program (ECP) will have sufficient funding to cover Hawai'i's needs, and that it will be available to Hawai'i's agricultural producers. In particular, desirable replacement lands have significant growth of invasive albizia trees on them. Clearing these shallow-rooted, fast-growing trees will allow farmers to move back into production quickly, while at the same time help to manage a significant environmental threat on Hawai'i Island.

In addition, we request your consideration of bill language to ensure that Hawai'i's displaced producers will receive the full benefit from this funding by allowing the use of ECP funds by farmers who lease their lands.

**4. USDA – Emergency Assistance for Livestock, Honey Bees, and Farm-Raised Fish**  
**REQUEST: \$2 million + Bill Language (enclosed)**

The Kīlauea eruption also had significant impacts on ranchers in areas affected by volcanic fumes, which are harmful to livestock. As a result, ranchers had to relocate stock to competitors' herds. In spite of the unprecedented help from other livestock operations, ranchers nonetheless incurred significant losses. Honey bee farmers also lost a significant number of hives due to both the heavy spring rains and the lava.

In addition, we request your consideration of bill language to ensure that Hawai'i's ranchers will be able to recover their losses.

**5. USDA – Rural Water and Waste Disposal Program**  
**REQUEST: \$100 million + Bill Language (enclosed)**

Severe flooding on Kaua'i Island washed out and destroyed public and individual wastewater and distribution systems. Emergency protective measures were required to bring in portable

toilets for resident usage. Raw sewage impacted the land and ocean environments. This funding would help the conversion from cesspools to sewage systems, and diminish environmental and public health risks from future events.

In addition, we request your consideration of bill language to ensure the eligibility of impacted communities by confirming the rural character of Hawai'i's neighbor islands, and setting aside a small amount of funding for grants for technical assistance.

## **6. DOI – Construction Accounts**

### **REQUEST: \$32 million**

Lava flows and earthquakes from the eruption caused significant damage to Department of the Interior facilities on Hawai'i Island. For example, the Hawai'i Volcanoes National Park (HVNP) will need a full replacement of its water system, repair or relocation of summit trails and roads, and the replacement of fencing that protects HVNP lands from feral ungulates such as wild pigs, goats, and cattle. The Hawai'i Volcanoes Observatory (HVO) is no longer safe for operations and all HVO personnel have been permanently displaced to other facilities primarily in Hilo. We will be requesting funding to replace the damaged facilities, but in doing so it is vital that HVO facilities and personnel remain on Hawaii Island where the volcanic threat remains the highest. The, and the Pacific Island Ecosystems Research Center (PIERC) has also had to relocate. All are critical for Hawai'i Island. HVO's role in the Kilauea eruption underscores its critical role to monitor volcanoes and issue warnings as needed. PIERC's work provides the science to support effective management of Hawai'i's terrestrial ecosystems, and has been at the forefront on the Rapid Ohi'a Death crisis, which threatens the keystone 'ōhi'a forests of Hawai'i Island. HVNP is a major economic driver for the County's economy, and its 134-day closure resulted in an \$80M loss to the local economy.

Additionally, record rain and subsequent flooding events on Kaua'i Island caused damage to Hanalei National Wildlife Refuge (NWR). This included damage to fences, gates, pavement, and water infrastructure, which is critical to wetland management as well as supplying water to the taro farmers in the NWR. The disaster also resulted in significant amounts of debris within the NWR that need to be addressed in order to ensure access and safety for employees, visitors, and the surrounding community.

## **CONCLUSION**

We strongly urge you to consider Hawai'i's unique disaster situation as you move forward with discussions on disaster relief and recovery funds. These disasters have placed a large burden on our state, exacerbating existing issues such as homelessness and lack of affordable housing and forcing a number of our small farmers to consider giving up on agricultural production altogether.

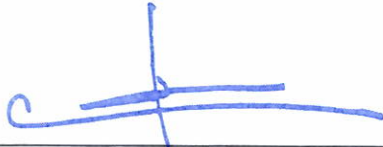
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Please do not hesitate to reach out to our offices with further questions. We thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

  
BRIAN SCHATZ  
United States Senator

  
MAZIE HIRONO  
United States Senator

  
COLLEEN HANABUSA  
Member of Congress

  
TULSI GABBARD  
Member of Congress

Enclosures

cc: The Honorable Mitch McConnell, Senate Majority Leader  
The Honorable Chuck Schumer, Senate Minority Leader  
The Honorable Paul Ryan, Speaker  
The Honorable Nancy Pelosi, House Minority Leader