

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

December 5, 2024

The Honorable Patty Murray
Chair
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Susan Collins
Vice Chair
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

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

The Honorable Rosa DeLauro
Ranking Member
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chair Murray, Vice Chair Collins, Chairman Cole, and Ranking Member DeLauro:

We write in full support of Georgia Governor Brian Kemp's November 19, 2024 request for at least \$12,186,094,452 in federal supplemental disaster appropriations for Georgia in the aftermath of Hurricane Helene.¹ On behalf of our farmers, families, and communities beginning the long road to recovery, we urge you to quickly produce a disaster supplemental funding package that includes this vitally important funding for Georgia's households, businesses, essential infrastructure, agricultural economy, and more.

Hurricane Helene struck Florida's coast as a Category 4 storm on September 27, 2024 before devastating communities across Florida, Georgia, South Carolina, North Carolina, Tennessee, and Virginia.² At its peak, Helene left more than 1 million Georgians without power, demanded 300 boil water advisories across the state, damaged over 200,000 homes, and left thousands of families displaced.³ Georgia's agriculture and forestry industries were left reeling in Helene's wake, with approximately one-third of the state's pecan and cotton crops destroyed, over 100 poultry houses damaged or destroyed, and 1.5 million acres of timber damaged or destroyed.⁴ All told, Georgia's agricultural economy faces an unprecedented estimated \$7.15 billion in total damages.⁵ Most tragically, 225 individuals – including 34 Georgians – lost their lives in Helene's devastation.⁶

¹ See Georgia Governor Kemp's Letter Enclosure.

² Emily Shapiro et al., *Hurricane Helene Updates: Death Toll Surpasses 230 As Rescue Efforts Continue*, ABC News (Oct. 7, 2024), <https://abcnews.go.com/US/live-updates/hurricane-helene/?id=113931821>.

³ Fernando Cervantes, Jr. and Eric Lagatta, *Georgia Power Outage Map: Track Outages After Helene Rips Through The Southeast*, USA Today (Sep. 28, 2024), <https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/weather/2024/09/27/georgia-power-outage-map-helene-aftermath/75401883007>; Sam Gringlas, *Helene Death Toll Jumps To 25 in Georgia, Over 100 Across The Southeast*, WABE (Sep. 30, 2024), <https://www.wabe.org/helene-death-toll-jumps-to-25-in-georgia-over-100-across-the-southeast>.

⁴ Heather Kolich, *Georgia Agricultural and Forestry Damage From Hurricane Helene Estimated At \$6.46 Billion*, UGA Extension Forsyth County (Oct. 18, 2024), <https://site.extension.uga.edu/forsyth/2024/10/georgia-agricultural-and-forestry-damage-from-hurricane-helene-estimated-at-6-46-billion>; See Georgia Governor Kemp's Letter.

⁵ *Id.*

⁶ *Billion-Dollar Weather and Climate Disasters*, National Centers for Environmental Information, [https://www.ncei.noaa.gov/access/billions/events/US/1980-2024?disasters\[\]=tropical-cyclone](https://www.ncei.noaa.gov/access/billions/events/US/1980-2024?disasters[]=tropical-cyclone); See Georgia

To date, the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) has provided over \$243 million in individual and household assistance to Georgians in need and continues to operate numerous disaster recovery and assistance centers across the state. We applaud the public servants and community leaders who have helped Georgia along its first steps toward recovery, but we know that more needs to be done, especially for our farmers and rural communities. Therefore, we urge you to work quickly to produce a disaster supplemental package that makes available at least \$12,186,094,452 across the following accounts to support Georgia’s ongoing disaster response and recovery:

- At least **\$7.15 billion** in assistance for Georgia’s farmers and ranchers, including **\$610,845,364** for Georgia’s forestry industry;
- At least **\$3.035 billion** to support Georgia’s recovering families and reconstruction of critical housing infrastructure through the Department of Housing and Urban Development’s (HUD) Community Development Fund, including at least **\$2.5 billion** for Community Development Block Grant Disaster Recovery (CDBG-DR) Housing Recovery, **\$400 million** for CDBG-DR – Economic Revitalization, **\$100 million** for CDBG-DR – Community Infrastructure, and **\$35 million** for the Emergency Housing Voucher Program;
- At least **\$1.8 billion** to support ongoing public and individual disaster recovery needs in Georgia through FEMA’s Disaster Recovery Fund, including at least **\$772,432,152** for Public Assistance, **\$497,090,311** for the Hazard Mitigation Grant Program, **\$300,000,000** for debris removal and emergency protective measures, **\$225,324,270** for Individual and Household Assistance, and **\$32,178,640** to address damages to campuses across the University System of Georgia;
- At least **\$50 million** for emergency repairs to Georgia’s hospital network through the Department of Health and Human Services’ (HHS) Public Health and Social Services Emergency Fund. We also request sufficient funding through this account to address the Intravenous Fluid (IV) shortages and medical supply chain resiliency challenges that threatened Georgia hospital operations in the immediate aftermath of Hurricane Helene;
- At least **\$507,223** to provide crisis counseling services for Georgians in the aftermath of Hurricane Helene through HHS’s Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration;
- At least **\$14,514,906** to provide food for nearly 1 million eligible Georgians through USDA’s Disaster Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (D-SNAP);⁷
- At least **\$501,586** to support Georgia’s nurses and their essential work during this crisis;

Governor Kemp’s Letter.

⁷ *USDA Announces Availability of D-SNAP For Disaster Areas In Georgia, North Carolina and Tennessee*, U.S. Department of Agriculture (Oct. 15, 2024), <https://www.usda.gov/media/press-releases/2024/10/15/usda-announces-availability-d-snap-disaster-areas-georgia-north>.

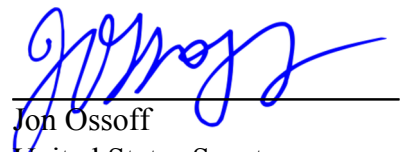
- At least **\$2.7 million** to support the retraining of affected workers through the Technical College System of Georgia and the Department of Labor's Training and Employment Services Program;
- At least **\$15 million** to address damage to critical mobility infrastructure through the Federal Highway Administration's Emergency Relief Program;
- At least **\$20 million** to support additional affordable housing construction and rehabilitation through the Department of the Treasury's disaster programs; and
- At least **\$150 million** to repair, rebuild, and make resilient community drinking water systems that support Georgia's homes, farms, businesses, and more through the Environmental Protection Agency's State and Tribal Assistance Grant Program.

Thank you for your continued support for a bipartisan disaster supplemental appropriations package. This funding will be a lifeline and an answered prayer for our constituents and fulfill our promise that they will not be alone on their road to recovery. We urge your immediate action to get this done.

Sincerely,



Raphael Warnock
United States Senator



Jon Ossoff
United States Senator



Earl L. "Buddy" Carter
Member of Congress



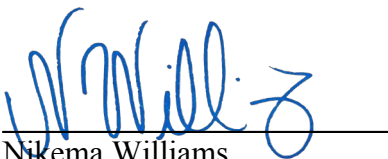
Rick W. Allen
Member of Congress



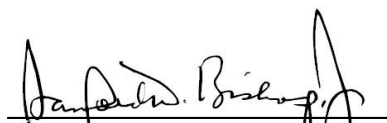
Austin Scott
Member of Congress



Henry C. "Hank" Johnson, Jr.
Member of Congress




Nikema Williams
Member of Congress



Sanford D. Bishop, Jr.
Member of Congress



A. Drew Ferguson IV
Member of Congress



Barry Loudermilk
Member of Congress



Mike Collins
Member of Congress



Rich McCormick, MD, MBA
Member of Congress



Lucy McBath
Member of Congress



David Scott
Member of Congress



Marjorie Taylor Greene
Member of Congress

Enclosure: Georgia Governor Kemp's Letter to Congressional Appropriators

Cc: Leader Schumer, Leader McConnell, Speaker Johnson, Leader Jeffries