

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20510

June 26, 2020

The Honorable Peter T. Gaynor
Administrator
Federal Emergency Management Agency
500 C Street SW
Washington, DC 20472

Dear Administrator Gaynor:

As the federal Congressional delegation, we strongly support the State of Maryland's efforts to begin the long road to recovery during the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. As such, we ask you to take immediate action to strengthen resiliency and mitigate future damages due this pandemic or future public health emergencies.

Recovery from this unprecedented event will test the limits of state and local resources, thus federal assistance fills critical gaps in recovery activities. In addition, grant funds to reduce the impact of future pandemics, and disasters more broadly, will reduce suffering and impacts on Marylanders.

We ask you to approve Maryland's use of the Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP). Following a Major Disaster Declaration, the HMGP provides mitigation funding directly to the states impacted by an incident. HMGP allows communities to address the underlying conditions of vulnerability. We understand that the Maryland Emergency Management Agency (MEMA) would work closely with FEMA on expanding eligible activities which are allowed to be funded by HMGP for this pandemic, as it is important that communities are able to apply these funds to areas that they have identified as at most risk. Hazard Mitigation strategies to improve underlying community conditions and to prepare for another public health emergency include, but are not limited to:

- Installing safe rooms in hospitals that can be used for tornadic activity and hurricane speed winds. These spaces could also be utilized to aid in surge capacity during a public health crisis.
- Developing and executing educational campaigns encouraging the community to prepare for disasters of any nature, including public health emergencies.
- Strengthening domestic supply-chain mechanisms and implementing hazard mitigation projects aimed at ensuring continuity of supply during public health emergencies and disasters. This should include the development of public-private partnerships to meet the gaps most recently experienced with the Strategic National Stockpile.

- Development of interoperable information technology systems for the monitoring of scarce critical resources, thus allowing for quick and efficient movement as necessary and providing signals to the suppliers/manufacturers.
- Installing notification systems, which have been used during the pandemic to communicate important information to the whole community.

FEMA initially designed this program to address “natural hazards” such as hurricanes or floods, which are discrete disasters. However, we believe that FEMA does have discretion to expand the HMGP to cover the response to this ongoing pandemic, which will have a much more deleterious, debilitating, wide-ranging, and longer-term impact on the state as well as on local governments and communities.

Thank you for your consideration of this important request during this ongoing pandemic. We look forward to your timely response.

Sincerely,

/s/ Benjamin L. Cardin
United States Senator

/s/ Chris Van Hollen
United States Senator

/s/ Steny H. Hoyer
Member of Congress

/s/ C.A. Dutch Ruppersberger
Member of Congress

/s/ John P. Sarbanes
Member of Congress

/s/ Kweisi Mfume
Member of Congress

/s/ Andy Harris, M.D.
Member of Congress

/s/ Anthony G. Brown
Member of Congress

/s/ Jamie Raskin
Member of Congress

/s/ David Trone
Member of Congress

CC: The Honorable MaryAnn E. Tierney, Regional Administrator for FEMA Region III