

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

[[DATE]]

The Honorable Kristi Noem
Secretary
U.S. Department of Homeland Security
2707 Martin Luther King Jr. Ave SE
Washington, DC 20528

The Honorable Cameron Hamilton
Senior Official Performing the Duties of FEMA
Administrator
500 C St SW
Washington, DC 20024

Dear Secretary Noem and Acting Administrator Hamilton,

We are writing to urge the Administration to reinstate the Building Resilient Infrastructure and Communities Grant (BRIC) program within the Federal Emergency Management Administration (FEMA). BRIC funds are spurring communities across the country to strengthen their resilience to extreme weather, and forgoing these critical investments will only make it harder and more expensive for communities to recover from the next storm. We acknowledge that the BRIC program, like all grant funding programs, has room for improvement, and we urge you to couple the reinstatement of the program with an opportunity for Congress and FEMA to improve the application review and funding distribution process to more effectively reduce the costs disasters pose to our communities, economies, and livelihoods.

The BRIC program was established by Congress in the 2018 Disaster Recovery Reform Act and signed into law by President Trump with bipartisan support. In the years since, this program has catalyzed community investments in resilient infrastructure, saving federal funds by investing in community preparedness before a disaster strikes.

According to research, one dollar invested in disaster mitigation can save up to \$18 in response and recovery expenditures.¹ BRIC funds are making communities safer in the next storm through projects like upgrading and protecting wastewater and drinking water plants after the facilities suffered repeated flooding, or bridge upgrades and road drainage improvements to improve driver safety. Because of its benefits, the demand for BRIC grants continues to increase, and our states and communities benefit from the reliability of the funding cycles.

At the same time, we acknowledge that the BRIC program should be evaluated for opportunities to increase efficiency and reduce the complexities for recipients to access the critical resources.² The benefits of the program should not be concentrated in or limited to jurisdictions with dedicated offices and the staff necessary to navigate the grant application requirements. Additionally, the program should be updated with a strategic

¹ Congressional Budget Office. (2016). Potential increases in hurricane damage in the United States: Implications for the federal budget (Publication No. 51518). <https://www.cbo.gov/publication/51518>; Dixon, L., Tsang, F., & Fitts, M. (2017). Coastal flood risk reduction and economic evaluation of projects: The case of coastal Louisiana. RAND Corporation. https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR1992.html; U.S. Chamber of Commerce (2024) <https://www.uschamber.com/security/the-preparedness-payoff-the-economic-benefits-of-investing-in-climate-resilience>; U.S. Government Accountability Office. (2019). Disaster resilience: Actions are underway, but federal fiscal exposure highlights the need for continued attention to longstanding challenges (GAO Publication No. GAO-20-100SP). <https://www.gao.gov/products/gao-20-100sp>; Melecky, M., & Raddatz, C. (2019). The economic effectiveness of disaster risk reduction: A case study from the Philippines. UNU-WIDER Working Paper 2019/7. <https://www.wider.unu.edu/publication/economic-effectiveness-disaster-risk-reduction>.

² <https://headwaterseconomics.org/natural-hazards/rising-demand-for-femas-bric-program-far-exceeds-available-funding/>

approach that empowers states and local governments to address degraded and vulnerable infrastructure based on their localized priorities and understanding of risk.

We urge the Administration to take swift action to reinstate the BRIC program, and to work with Congress to identify and implement much needed reforms to strengthen our nation's resilience for decades to come.

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[[SIGNATURES]]