



NEW YORK STATE LEGISLATURE

September 22, 2021

Honorable Kathy Hochul, Governor
State of New York
Executive Chamber, Second Floor
State Capitol
Albany, New York 12224

RE: Tropical Storm Fred flood damage in Steuben and surrounding counties on August 18, 2021

Dear Governor Hochul,

We appreciate this opportunity to contact you directly to urge your immediate attention to severe flash flooding from Tropical Storm Fred that devastated local roads and other infrastructure, homes, businesses and schools across multiple counties across the regions we represent, with numerous municipalities in southwestern Steuben County being the hardest hit.

It is our understanding that you have received a detailed report on the local devastation and its costs, and that on September 18th you submitted a request to the federal government for a disaster declaration from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) on their behalf and in order for them to qualify for desperately needed federal aid for both Public and Individual assistance. Should you need or want any additional information moving forward, please know we are happy to assist in any way we can.

As you know, the impact is wide and significant. For example, the Jasper-Troupsburg Junior/Senior High School was completely destroyed. Damages to this one school alone may surpass the \$30-million FEMA threshold for a disaster declaration and the repair work is anticipated to take more than two years to complete. In the meantime, hundreds of students will be displaced and affected in various ways.

We appreciate your continued direct assistance in securing the FEMA declaration and subsequent federal financial assistance, and we know that you recognize its immediate importance.

We also know that you are well aware, especially from your past experience as a local leader, how this type of historic flooding that destroys homes, businesses, personal property, roads, bridges, culverts, and other local infrastructure – not to mention the agricultural and environmental impacts -- places enormous strain and stress on local communities, governments, individuals and families, farmers, and property taxpayers.

First, please know that your personal attention and leadership in the aftermath of the August 18th flooding has been welcomed. Furthermore, your administration's deployment of state resources – emergency responders and equipment, work crews from the Departments of Transportation and

Environmental Conservation, health care professionals, and more – to assist our local first responders has been greatly appreciated.

According to Steuben County Emergency Services, the hardest hit areas on August 18th included the towns of West Union, Woodhull, Troupsburg, Tuscarora, Greenwood, Canisteo, Jasper, and Addison. Numerous regional roads have been impacted including, but not limited to SR 417, SR 36, CR 21, CR 85, CR 103, CR 117, and CR 129.

This portion of Steuben County and a significant amount of its local infrastructure has been impacted. The hardship on many homeowners and businesses in individual towns is severe. County and town resources and responders are overwhelmed.

Of course the damage is far beyond what any local government could handle on its own – particularly such rural and sparsely populated as these impacted communities are -- and we remain hopeful that following your request, a FEMA disaster declaration and accompanying federal aid will be forthcoming in the very near future.

Once again, the state's assistance on the ground up to now has been timely and very appreciated.

Nevertheless, the situation is dire. Again, the costs of rebuilding and repairing public infrastructure – combined by the enormous costs and hardship inflicted on individual homeowners and businesses -- simply cannot be met without additional state assistance.

Consequently, we urge you to also immediately make direct state aid and other assistance available to individual homeowners, businesses, farms, and the municipalities themselves – as the State of New York has done for hard-hit communities in the recent past. The State of New York has undertaken precedent-setting responses to other disasters in many regions of New York, including ours, specifically and most importantly by helping with the local share of the costs during Hurricanes Sandy and Irene, for example.

Additionally, in 2013 and 2014, the state provided assistance to cover the local share of rebuilding from flooding in Sullivan County and the Mohawk Valley, as well as assisting Yates County and the Village of Penn Yan in 2014 following severe flash flooding. In late 2018, the state established a new residential assistance program that specifically assisted homeowners with direct grants in the wake of flash flooding, also in August of that year, which severely impacted communities in the Southern Tier and Finger Lakes regions.

In these instances where FEMA traditionally covered 75 percent of the recovery costs, and New York State and localities each picked up a 12.5-percent share, the state also assumed the local share so that the recovery costs were covered by the federal (75 percent) and state (25 percent) governments.

We cannot emphasize enough just how poor these rural communities are.

Furthermore, New York State has established precedents of providing direct grants – as opposed to any type of a low- or no-interest loan -- in the amounts of 10K-25K for homeowners and 25K-50K for business owners. Many homeowners and business owners simply could not afford to assume an additional loan under these circumstances.

[NOTE: For your information and review, we have attached a series of links to news articles highlighting New York State's past efforts to cover the local share of recovery costs and provide state grants to flood victims.]

In summary, we strongly believe New York State needs to follow this model of comprehensive state assistance again to most effectively address the current recovery and rebuilding effort. Specifically this means that New York State will:

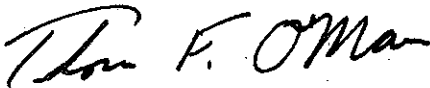
> fully assume the 12.5-percent local share the disaster-related costs; and

> provide direct state grants of 10K-25K to help cover the costs of repairing and rebuilding for homeowners, and grants for 25K-50K for businesses.

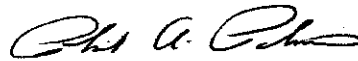
Furthermore, we would also like to stress that the fast-approaching colder weather places an added sense of urgency for businesses and homeowners facing the need to replace boilers, furnaces, hot water tanks, and other heating system-related repairs.

As always, thank you your immediate attention to this important request and please contact us if we can provide additional information or assist in any other way.

Sincerely,



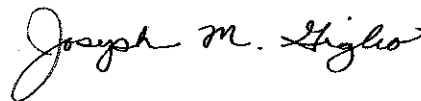
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