

NEW YORK STATE LEGISLATURE

January 18, 2022

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 – as a direct follow-up to our correspondence last September 22nd and many subsequent conversations since that time – to once again urge your immediate attention to severe flash flooding from Tropical Storm Fred last August 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 the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) has rejected your appeal of the agency's decision denying desperately needed federal aid for Individual Assistance to help area residents recover and rebuild.

We know that you have received a detailed report on the local devastation and its costs, and we have welcomed your direct efforts to date in working to secure federal assistance. In fact, we have taken the opportunity over the past several months to patiently work closely with you and your administration to fully and strongly support your appeal and to continue working to convince FEMA that federal Individual Assistance was warranted and urgently needed for so many of the residents we represent.

It's unfortunate that FEMA continues to fail to recognize this need.

Nevertheless, now it becomes critical for the State of New York, as we have in the past, to take immediate action to provide the necessary relief and assistance.

As you know, the impact of last summer's flooding was wide and significant.

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.

Towards that end, your personal attention and leadership in the aftermath of the August 18th flooding has been appreciated. 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 was extremely beneficial.

Despite all of these efforts, however, the hardship on many homeowners and businesses in individual towns remains severe. County and town resources and responders have been overwhelmed. The damage is far beyond what any local government can handle on its own - particularly for such rural and sparsely populated communities.

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 – especially in light of FEMA’s continued denial of Individual Assistance -- we once again urge you to immediately make direct state aid and other assistance available to individual homeowners, businesses, farms, and the municipalities themselves.

New York State has delivered aid for hard-hit communities in the recent past. It’s the right thing to do, the state clearly has the resources to do it, and we hope you will respond in kind for our communities now.

In fact, precedent-setting responses to other disasters have been undertaken 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.

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 cannot afford to assume an additional loan under these circumstances.

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

Specifically this means that New York State must:

- **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 of 25K-50K for businesses.**

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

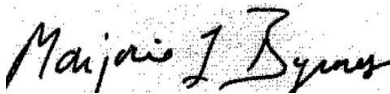
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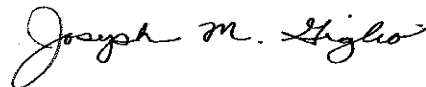
Thomas F. O'Mara
58th Senate District



Philip A. Palmesano
132nd Assembly District



Marjorie Byrnes
133rd Assembly District



Joseph M. Giglio
148th Assembly District