

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-3203

July 14, 2023

The Honorable Joseph R. Biden, Jr.
President
1600 Pennsylvania Ave N.W.
Washington, DC 20230

Dear President Biden,

We write to respectfully urge your swift consideration and authorization of the Major Disaster declaration request from Governor Hochul on behalf of the State of New York in the wake of the devastating flooding in the Hudson Valley, Finger Lakes, and North Country of New York, and across the state. Specifically, for Ontario and Orange counties to receive Individual Assistance (IA) and Albany, Clinton, Dutchess, Essex, Hamilton, Ontario, Orange, Oswego, Putnam, Rensselaer, Rockland, and Westchester Counties to receive Public Assistance (PA). The Preliminary Damage Assessment is not done, and we support the inclusion of any additional counties inclusion that New York State believes meet the threshold for IA and PA. This is following our letter of support to the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) in the storm's immediate aftermath urging them to stand ready to support New York State's response and recovery efforts. Such a declaration under the *Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act* (PL 100-707) would unlock crucial FEMA resources and assets that will aid the State, first responders, and community efforts to recover and rebuild in the coming months and years.

On July 9, 2023, the Hudson Valley region and much of southeastern New York was hit by up to eight inches of rain in less than 12 hours that caused catastrophic flash flooding, as well as the Finger Lakes and North Country regions where rain flooded homes, roads, and businesses. On July 9, New York Governor Kathy Hochul declared a State of Emergency for Orange County and Ontario County due to the impacts of the flooding. The following day, Governor Hochul expanded the state's emergency declaration to include Clinton and Essex counties in the North Country, which comprises New York's Adirondack region. Homes have been destroyed, roads and bridges washed away, and tragically at least one person has died. Highland Falls, home to the U.S. Military Academy at West Point, has been hit particularly hard. Many roads in and out of the city have been damaged, including routes 218 and 9W from Cornwall to West Point, the Palisades Interstate Parkway, the Bear Mountain Bridge, and Popelopen Bridge. New York State Police advised that many of these road closures are expected to remain in effect for the foreseeable future. People were forced to swim to safety after becoming trapped in their cars on roadways. Rescue workers and first responders worked tirelessly throughout the night of July 9th and into July 10th to aid those in need, including completing more than 50 rescues in Orange County. Additionally, Metro North – Hudson Line train service was suspended for days between

Croton-Harmon and Poughkeepsie due to the impact of severe weather on the tracks, with one train becoming stuck at Manitou Station in Garrison on Sunday night, forcing emergency responders to evacuate passengers. Furthermore, the Newburgh-Beacon Ferry service was not operational on Monday due to impacts of the storm. In Ontario County floods impacted nearly 100 homes and displaced residents. Sewage systems and water treatment plants have struggled to keep up with the massive amounts of water entering their systems, damaging and in some cases halting their operations.

With the floods behind us, New Yorkers are looking at how to rebuild, and while we know the Preliminary Damage Assessment process is underway, we urge your swift consideration and approval of the Major Disaster declaration request from Governor Hochul. The federal government must unlock the resources necessary to rebuild, and rebuild stronger, and this Major Disaster declaration is the next step in getting New Yorkers the help they need to do exactly that. We are grateful for the prompt attention that the federal government has historically given in responding to disasters impacting New York State. In that spirit, we strongly urge you to approve New York's Major Disaster declaration request as affected communities begin their recovery from this storm.

Sincerely,



Charles E. Schumer
United States Senator



Kirsten E. Gillibrand
United States Senator