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Congress of the United States
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April 22, 2020

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

Dear Administrator Gaynor,

I am writing to strongly urge the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) to broaden the list of eligible activities covered by the Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP) in order to cover pandemics such as COVID-19. This virus, along with our national response to it, is unprecedented. In order to deal with the long-lasting effects of COVID-19 and also mitigate our risk to future viruses, expanding guidelines to proven programs such as the HMGP is preferable to devising entire new programs that focus on mitigating pandemics.

The HMGP provides funds to States, local governments, recognized tribes, and certain non-profits following a Presidential Major Disaster Declaration. The key purpose of the HMGP is to ensure that opportunities to take mitigation measures to reduce the loss of life and property from future disasters is not lost while society recovers following a disaster. In the wake of Hurricane Sandy, HMGP funds were used to ensure residents were protected from future storms and floods through projects such as home elevation.

The current list of HMGP eligible activities covers a number of mitigation projects including, but not limited to, structure relocation, soil stabilization, acquisition of generators, infrastructure retro-fitting, and post-disaster code enforcement. Adding pandemic-related eligible activities such as modifying hospitals and shelters to allow infected or evacuated people to maintain social distancing and to surge bed capacity, education about social distancing and other techniques to stop the spread of viruses, providing funding for purchasing insurance FEMA requires for any future Major Disaster Declaration, assisting hospitals in obtaining ventilators, and helping other critical facilities to stockpile PPE would help mitigate risks to our healthcare system and other critical infrastructure from future pandemics.

COVID-19 is a biological disaster unparalleled in the history of our country. The virus has affected all states and territories as well as the District of Columbia. In the months and years ahead, FEMA will bear a tremendous responsibility to prepare for the next pandemic. Adding pandemic-related eligible activities to the HMGP will provide a roadmap for mitigating the risks

we face from future outbreaks. With so many lives on the line, we know FEMA will rise to the task and take necessary actions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'MRose', followed by a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Max Rose
Member of Congress