

Congress of the United States

House of Representatives

Washington, DC 20515-3302

November 22, 2024

The Honorable Mike Johnson
Speaker
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Hakeem Jeffries
Minority Leader
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Tom Cole
Chairman
House Committee on Appropriations
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Rosa DeLauro
Ranking Member
House Committee on Appropriations
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Speaker Johnson, Minority Leader Jeffries, Chairman Cole, and Ranking Member DeLauro:

As you begin to craft disaster supplemental funding legislation to provide for a continued federal response to Hurricanes Helene and Milton and other natural disasters, we strongly urge you to include \$25.57 billion in federal support for North Carolina as requested by Governor Roy Cooper.

Hurricane Helene was the most devastating storm in our state's history, resulting in the deaths of over 100 North Carolinians and causing a staggering \$53.6 billion in total damage and needs in our state alone, according to the North Carolina Office of State Budget and Management. The total rainfall from Hurricane Helene exceeded 30 inches in some parts of our state and more than 4.6 million North Carolinians currently reside in counties designated by FEMA for disaster assistance. The intensity and duration of the storm combined with Western North Carolina's unique geography led to widespread, catastrophic destruction and will pose exceptional challenges to a recovery that will take years if not decades.

Communities large and small across Western North Carolina were devastated. Over 150,000 homes sustained damage; transportation infrastructure ranging from major highways to private access roads was destroyed; water and sewer infrastructure, including both municipal systems and private wells and septic tanks, is inoperable; and communications and utilities infrastructure will require significant repair or replacement. The lasting negative impact on day-to-day life and essential services cannot be understated. Healthcare facilities and childcare centers sustained massive damage and some are still unable to reopen. In addition, K-12 schools and institutions of higher education suffered a total of \$844 million in damage while many North Carolina students are now unable to repay loans.

In the aftermath of the storm, the many small businesses that form the backbone of the Western North Carolina economy are struggling to keep their doors open. Direct property destruction in addition to the critical infrastructure damage outlined above have resulted in severe economic loss. Furthermore, Helene's impact came during the high season for tourism in our beautiful state, closing down the region at a time when our businesses rely on visitors for revenue. In addition, over 20,000 farms are located in disaster-declared counties and our agricultural sector, including specialty crop operations, was devastated. Further, more than 300,000 acres of public land reportedly sustained damage, and a substantial proportion of the over \$2.6 billion in annual spending by visitors to our national parks and the Blue Ridge Parkway could be lost.

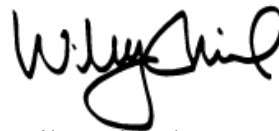
We are grateful for the effective federal response before, during, and after Helene's impact, which undoubtedly saved countless lives. FEMA, the Department of Defense, and other federal agencies and partners mounted a historic response to the storm, including search and rescue operations, resource distribution, temporary housing, critical infrastructure repair, and much more. But simply put—there remains a need for immediate action on significant additional federal funding as we enter the recovery and rebuilding phase.

Again, we strongly urge you to include \$25.57 billion in federal support for North Carolina in any disaster supplemental funding legislation. Thank you for your consideration of our request and for standing with our friends and neighbors in Western North Carolina.

Very truly yours,



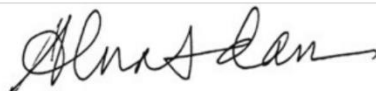
Deborah K. Ross
Member of Congress



Wiley Nickel
Member of Congress



Donald G. Davis
Member of Congress



Alma S. Adams, PhD.
Member of Congress



Valerie P. Foushee
Member of Congress



Kathy Manning
Member of Congress