



**Congress of the United States**  
**House of Representatives**  
**Washington, DC 20515**

April 7, 2020

The Honorable Peter T. Gaynor, Administrator  
Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA)  
500 C Street NW  
Washington, DC 20472

Administrator Gaynor:

We are writing to express our urgent concern for the continued safety of our firefighters and for the economic hardships that fire departments across the nation are now facing amidst the COVID-19 crisis.

Programs like FEMA's Staffing for Adequate Fire and Emergency Response (SAFER) grants are an important tool in helping communities across the nation meet their firefighting and emergency response needs. Unfortunately, in the midst of a pandemic, our local fire departments are being called upon far more frequently, placing a strain on our communities to cover the cost of delivering those critical services. We hope you will take swift action and waive cost-sharing requirements for all grant awardees so that these fire departments have greater flexibility in deciding the best use of scarce resources.

Your authority to issue such a blanket waiver of cost-sharing requirements is clear. The House Appropriations Committee noted in H.Rept. 113-481 accompanying the FY2015 DHS Appropriation, H.R. 4903, that "the reauthorization of the SAFER program by the 112th Congress (Public Law 112-239) provided FEMA with permanent authority to waive certain matching and non-supplantation requirements for grantees based on a determination that a grantee meets economic hardship criteria" and that "waivers in future fiscal years will be limited to the authorization provided in Public Law 112-239."

Moreover, Section 1804. (d) of P.L. 112-239 provides the FEMA Administrator significant leeway to "establish and publish guidelines for determining what constitutes economic hardship" for the purposes of such a waiver. In light of the President's declaration of a National Emergency Concerning the Novel Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19) Outbreak on March 13, 2020, and ongoing life and safety missions, it is wholly consistent with federal policy for you to determine

that all awardees are experiencing economic hardship as a result of the coronavirus pandemic and provide a waiver of cost-sharing requirements for the duration of this crisis.

We have heard from mayors and fire chiefs in our state that SAFER grant cost-sharing requirements are forcing them to make tough decisions about whether to lay off fire fighters—at a time when our communities need first responders and emergency personnel more than ever. Your waiver of cost-sharing requirements will help ensure that no municipality will have to make the impossible choice of choosing between first responders and other urgent priorities in the midst of a national emergency.

We hope you will give this matter timely consideration and provide immediate relief for our nation’s firefighters. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to reach out to our offices.

Sincerely,

RASHIDA TLAIB  
Member of Congress

GARY C. PETERS  
U.S. Senator

DEBBIE STABENOW  
U.S. Senator

JACK BERGMAN  
Member of Congress

DEBBIE DINGELL  
Member of Congress

BILL HUIZENGA  
Member of Congress

DANIEL T. KILDEE  
Member of Congress

BRENDA LAWRENCE  
Member of Congress

ANDY LEVIN  
Member of Congress

PAUL MITCHELL  
Member of Congress

JOHN MOOLENAAR  
Member of Congress

ELISSA SLOTKIN  
Member of Congress

HALEY M. STEVENS  
Member of Congress

FRED UPTON  
Member of Congress

TIM WALBERG  
Member of Congress