

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20510

September 21, 2020

The Honorable Peter T. Gaynor
Administrator
Federal Emergency Management Agency
500 C St. S.W.C
Washington, D.C. 20472

Dear Administrator Gaynor,

We write to emphasize the urgent need for FEMA to quickly deliver the widest possible range of transitional housing units to the areas of Oregon impacted by the ongoing wildfires. While we appreciate the logistical challenges underpinning transitional housing delivery as part of the broader FEMA response, the scale and timing of the destruction caused by fires across Oregon demands a broad and immediate deployment of transitional housing options from the federal government, including manufactured housing units.

As you are undoubtedly aware, Oregon has declared a State of Emergency because of the recent wildfires, and the President, acting on the recommendation of FEMA's Region 10 Administrator, approved the state's Major Disaster Declaration on September 15th, 2020. These actions to unlock emergency disaster relief resources come in the wake of deadly fires fueled by straight line winds and dry environmental conditions. As of today, there were 11 active fires in Oregon with more than 968,556 acres burned.

The fires, which have leveled entire communities and neighborhoods, have had a particularly devastating impact on Oregon's already strained affordable housing stock. This is especially true in multiple cities and towns throughout Southern and Central Oregon, the mid-Willamette Valley, Santiam Canyon, and the North Coast. At most recent count, more than 2,350 residential structures have been destroyed in the Southern Oregon communities of Phoenix and Talent, including numerous manufactured housing communities and federally financed properties that have historically served low-income residents, seniors, and farmworkers.

With several large fires still burning across the state, the full scale of damage will not be known for several weeks. What we do know is that thousands of families have lost their homes and will be in need of transitional housing and longer term relief. Hotels in the area are already stretched thin hosting evacuees in addition to people impacted by the COVID pandemic, and with winter approaching the need for non-congregate shelter to house the unsheltered will also increase. Without prompt deployment of robust transitional housing options to ensure affordable, stable housing as the rebuilding process begins, many working families who have lost their homes will be left with difficult choices about whether they can afford to leave or stay in their communities.

These decisions will not only affect their families, but also have implications for their employers, their school districts, and the local economy. While we remain supportive of FEMA's

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commitment to deliver all appropriate forms of housing assistance to impacted communities, the destruction we have observed on the ground requires a particularly robust—and swift—transitional housing component.

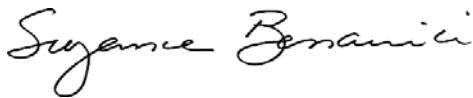
Sincerely,



Jeffrey A. Merkley
United States Senator



Ron Wyden
United States Senator



Suzanne Bonamici
Member of Congress



Earl Blumenauer
Member of Congress



Peter DeFazio
Member of Congress



Kurt Schrader
Member of Congress