

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20510

September 3, 2025

The Honorable Kristi Noem
Secretary
U.S. Department of Homeland Security
3801 Nebraska Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20528

David Richardson
Acting Administrator
Federal Emergency Management Agency
500 C Street, SW, 8th Floor
Washington, DC 20472

Dear Secretary Noem and Acting Administrator Richardson:

We urge you to honor FEMA's commitments and award Clatsop County and Columbia Memorial Hospital (CMH) the remaining previously awarded grant funds for the Clatsop County Tsunami Earthquake Astoria Hospital Project. These funds are necessary for the North Coast community to withstand the elevated threat of natural disasters, including the anticipated Cascadia Subduction Zone event and the tsunami that will follow. Clatsop County and CMH are the recipients of a Fiscal Year 2022 \$20,845,683 Building Resilient Infrastructure and Communities (BRIC) grant, and have been working collaboratively with local, state, and federal partners for years to prepare for and execute the construction of a new hospital. The new facility would combine solutions to two of the region's most pressing needs into one facility: a Critical Access Hospital and the infrastructure necessary to act as a vertical evacuation shelter in the event of an earthquake and tsunami.

Specifically, CMH worked closely with and relied on direction from FEMA to phase its award and obligations in two parts – one for design and the second for construction – with the assurance that the vast majority of its grant would be available to it at the closeout of Phase 1. CMH now finds itself at this critical juncture. The essential major elements of Phase 2 are scheduled to undergo significant construction in September 2025 but require the full awarded funding amount to be completed. The project's major construction elements cannot proceed without the entire award being honored. Through working with your agency, CMH has met every checkpoint and milestone, including securing the \$6 million local cost share necessary to receive the grant. Moreover, the project has strong support from bipartisan local leaders, including the business community, city and county officials, and the Oregon State Legislature. Now FEMA needs to keep its end of the agreement.

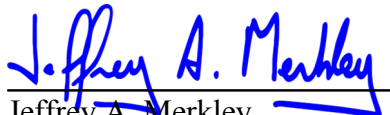
CMH has invested significant resources to adhere to federal requirements, including costs associated with the Build America, Buy America Act (BABA); hiring an Environmental and Historical Preservation consultant to meet FEMA compliance regulations; hiring Benefit-Cost Analysis consultants to validate the cost-effectiveness of the project at key milestones; and considerable grant management costs accumulated over two years to advance the project to award. This project has been federalized, and there is no turning back for CMH – the vertical evacuation infrastructure funded through BRIC is deeply integrated into the basic design of the building and cannot be removed without requiring complete building redesign. Eliminating the

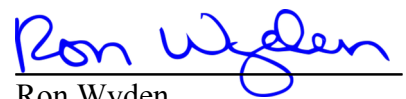
federal cost share will result in substantial strain and exponentially increased costs for a rural community with severely limited resources.

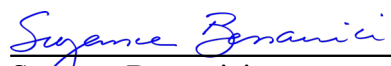
FEMA must not undermine its commitment to investing in enhancing the nation's emergency preparedness and supporting innovative solutions driven by community leaders like CMH. CMH's project will allow nearly 1,900 people to seek refuge in a disaster and to access critical health care services, and life-saving food and water supplies. The model CMH developed with FEMA serves as a gold standard for communities across the Pacific Coast as they plan and prepare to develop similar emergency hubs for their residents to seek shelter during a major earthquake and tsunami. FEMA has long played a role as a federal partner in these efforts and needs to continue these investments. Failure to do so would be catastrophic in the long term, resulting in increased loss of life and property and lead to greater inefficiencies in post-disaster response.

CMH is a rural, standalone hospital in a medically underserved region of Oregon. It is not part of a large network with endless resources. Yet, this small rural hospital has exceeded every requirement to diligently develop, plan, and fund a project that will transform the region's security and emergency preparedness, save lives, and continue to do what they do best – serve their community members during critical times of need. Now, FEMA must honor its commitment and complete the investment it promised this community. We urge you to immediately finalize Clatsop County and CMH's Phase 2 funding award prior to the scheduled September start to the next part of construction.

Sincerely,


Jeffrey A. Merkley
United States Senator


Ron Wyden
United States Senator


Suzanne Bonamici
Member of Congress