

**The Honorable Glenn A. Youngkin**

Governor of Virginia  
P.O. Box 1475  
Richmond, VA 23218

Dear Governor Youngkin,

**We, the undersigned organizations, strongly urge you to use your position and influence on the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Review Council to strengthen and improve FEMA's delivery of services.** Ahead of what forecasters predict will be an abnormally active hurricane season, Virginians can't afford to be abandoned by the federal government – our communities deserve the certainty that FEMA will be there to support state and local disaster response.

Virginians depend on coordinated federal, state and local disaster responses that effectively allocate resources to disaster-affected areas. States, including Virginia, cannot and should not have to provide a comprehensive disaster response without federal support. In recent years, Virginia has received federal support from both the Individuals and Households Program (IHP) and the Public Assistance Program (PA). Under your administration, Virginia received \$111,846,163 from PA in 2022; after Hurricane Helene in 2024, Virginia received \$14,688,637 through IHP and \$20,609,439 from PA. This funding provided significant support to Virginians in disaster-affected areas, allowing communities to rebuild and people to repair their homes.

FEMA not only helps Virginia in times of crisis, but also provides key support in mitigating the risk of future disasters by funding resiliency projects. However, the administration's cuts to FEMA's Building Resilient Infrastructure and Communities grant program and hazard mitigation grants as part of disaster recovery eliminate major lifelines that protect Virginians from extreme weather. For example, a \$12 million FEMA grant to the city of Richmond that would have paid for upgrades to its water treatment plant to prevent damage from extreme weather has been canceled, putting thousands of people's access to clean drinking water at risk during the next big storm.

In 2018, a study by the National Institute of Building Sciences found every dollar of federal investment into resiliency projects, taxpayers save \$6. Without federal investments to help shoulder the financial burden, local projects become financially uncertain and, in many cases, unfeasible. Hampton Roads is estimated to require a total of \$40 billion in resilience projects to protect it from rising seas, but questions on costs are already arising: the total cost of Virginia Beach's Flood Protection Program, which is funded through increased real estate taxes, has already doubled from the initial \$567.5 million to \$1 billion, resulting in major concerns about the growing cost burden on the local community. Building flood-resilient infrastructure is increasingly expensive and would be increasingly difficult for state and local budgets to absorb these additional costs without raising taxes that often impact the people who need the help the most.

The resilience of our communities' infrastructure isn't a political talking point – it's a key factor in determining whether our cities and towns survive and thrive following a disaster. We urge you to strengthen FEMA by ensuring that:

- FEMA's disaster relief programs are fully funded with adequate staff, guaranteeing immediate and long-term support for disaster survivors.
- The application process for FEMA disaster aid is accessible, easy to use, streamlined, transparent, and understandable to all users.
- Federal disaster aid is deployed based on need, in strict compliance with civil rights laws.
- All who are displaced by disasters are given safe and secure temporary housing near or within their home community.
- Disaster relief is supplied safely, equitably, consistently, and understandably to all who are affected, for as long as they need in order to recover housing, jobs, and property.
- Renters and anyone experiencing homelessness before the disaster quickly get quality, affordable, accessible rental property in safe, quality neighborhoods of their choice.
- All neighborhoods are free from environmental hazards, have quality and accessible public infrastructure, and are safe and resilient.

Communities depend on federal disaster relief in times of crisis. While rebuilding after living through a devastating flood, people in need are not interested in what politicians are discussing in Washington; they want to be able to easily apply for aid and be awarded enough funding from the taxes they pay to put their lives back together. Virginians deserve a strong, efficient, and comprehensive federal disaster relief system that leverages local knowledge, federal resources, addresses community-specific issues, and responds to the needs of every Virginian, regardless of who they might be.

We strongly urge you to use your position and influence to strengthen and improve FEMA's delivery of services for Virginian communities.

**Sincerely,**

Appalachian Voices  
Chesapeake Climate Action Network  
Clean Fairfax  
Climate & Clean Energy Working Group,  
Virginia Grassroots Coalition  
Coalition for Smarter Growth  
Community Climate Collaborative (C3)  
Fairfax Forward of the Commonwealth of  
Virginia  
Nature Forward  
Northern Virginia Bird Alliance

Northern Virginia Conservation Trust  
Roanoke Group, Sierra Club  
Rockfish Valley Foundation  
Sierra Club Virginia Chapter  
Third Act Virginia  
Tri-Cities TN/VA Mutual Aid Network  
Virginia Beach Audubon Society  
Virginia League of Conservation Voters  
Virginia Housing Alliance  
Virginia Interfaith Power & Light  
Wetlands Watch