



North Carolina Association  
of County Commissioners



March 6, 2025

**TO: ALEX MEYER**  
**DIRECTOR, WHITE HOUSE OFFICE OF INTERGOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS**  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.  
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. Meyer,

We are writing to you on behalf of the North Carolina Association of County Commissioners (NCACC), the North Carolina League of Municipalities (NCLM), and the Land of Sky Regional Council to highlight critical issues facing local governments in the aftermath of Tropical Storm Helene and to request your support in addressing these issues at the federal level. Together, we represent 239 local governments in the western part of North Carolina that suffered a federally declared disaster after Tropical Storm Helene struck in the fall of 2024.

Helene caused catastrophic damage, resulting in over 100 deaths and widespread destruction. The economic impact of the storm is estimated to exceed \$60 billion, placing an overwhelming burden on local governments as they work to address both the immediate recovery needs and longer-term challenges. As we navigate the recovery process, we seek your leadership and support in the following key areas:

**1. Local Government Representation on the President's Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Review Council**

It is vital that local governments have a voice on the President's FEMA Review Council. Local governments are on the front lines during disaster response and recovery, and having representation on this council would ensure that local priorities and concerns are adequately addressed in the federal disaster relief process. Local leaders possess critical insight into the immediate and long-term needs of communities, and their involvement will strengthen disaster response and recovery efforts.

**2. Explore New Mechanisms for FEMA to Cover Disaster Costs Upfront**

The current reimbursement-based model for federal disaster funding often places local governments in a difficult financial position, requiring them to front costs and wait for reimbursement. We urge you to explore mechanisms that would allow FEMA to provide disaster funding upfront, enabling local governments to respond more effectively and efficiently without the added burden of managing cash flow issues in the aftermath of a disaster.

### 3. **Support Flexible Direct Funding to Local Governments**

In addition to disaster recovery costs, local governments are facing significant revenue shortfalls as a result of Helene's destruction. Local governments rely heavily on property and sales tax revenue, both of which have been significantly impacted by the storm. Property values in affected areas have been diminished due to widespread damage, and local governments have seen a near-total loss of tourism revenue, which is crucial to many of our communities. Flexible direct funding to local governments will help alleviate cash flow issues and address the revenue losses that are expected to persist for years.

The financial strain on local governments is not limited to the immediate costs of disaster recovery but extends to longer-term fiscal impacts that will be felt for many years. We ask for your support in addressing these challenges through direct federal intervention to ensure that local governments have the resources they need to recover, rebuild, and continue serving their communities.

We also seek federal support to repair and rebuild damaged housing and privately-owned roads and bridges and bridges across Western North Carolina. Specifically, we respectfully request continued support for Community Development Block Grants for Disaster Recovery (CDBG-DR) to address unmet housing needs and long-term recovery. We also support the bipartisan Restoring Access to Mountain Homes Act (H.R. 760/S. 267) sponsored in the U.S. House by Representatives Edwards, Davis, and Moore, and in the U.S. Senate by Senators Budd and Tillis. This bill would allow for reimbursement under the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act for repairs, replacements, and restorations of private roads and bridges damaged by Tropical Storm Helene in North Carolina.

We appreciate your attention to these important issues and look forward to working with your office to ensure that the needs of local governments are prioritized in federal disaster response and recovery efforts. Please do not hesitate to contact us if we can provide any additional information or assistance.

Sincerely,

**Kevin Leonard**

Executive Director

*North Carolina Association of County  
Commissioners (NCACC)*

**Nathan Ramsey**

Executive Director

*Land of Sky Regional Council*

**Rose Williams**

Executive Director

*North Carolina League of Municipalities (NCLM)*

**Russ Harris**

Executive Director

*Southwestern Commission*

**Danna Stansbury**

Executive Director

*Foothills Regional Commission*

**Anthony W. Star**

Executive Director

*Western Piedmont Council of Governments*

**Julie Wiggins**

Executive Director

*High Country Council of Governments*