

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

April 11, 2025

The Honorable Kristi Noem
Secretary
U.S. Department of Homeland Security
2707 Martin Luther King, Jr. Avenue, SE
Washington, D.C. 20528

The Honorable Cameron Hamilton
Senior Official Performing the Duties of FEMA Administrator
Federal Emergency Management Agency
500 C Street, SW
Washington, DC 20024

Dear Secretary Noem and Senior Official Performing the Duties of FEMA
Administrator Hamilton:

We write to express our deep concern and strong opposition to the Federal Emergency Management Agency's (FEMA) recent decision to eliminate funding for the Building Resilient Infrastructure and Communities (BRIC) program, including more than \$325 million in grants targeted for critical infrastructure and flood mitigation projects across New York State.¹ We urge you to reverse your decision to eliminate BRIC funding, take immediate steps to reinstate previously approved grants without delay, and unfreeze the \$1.6 billion in additional Disaster Relief Funds for New York that remain unjustly withheld.

The BRIC program, created by President Trump in his first term, was designed to build resilience ahead of disasters—not after. In New York, we know all too well the devastating toll that extreme weather can take on our communities. From Superstorm Sandy and Hurricane Ida to more recent floods, blizzards, and wildfires, New Yorkers have endured disasters that are becoming more frequent and more severe. A recent study by the Regional Plan Association warns that accelerating flooding could destroy at least 80,000 homes in the New York City metro area by 2040, posing serious threats to safety, housing, and stability.² This is a mounting crisis.

¹ Federal Emergency Management Agency. "FEMA Ends Wasteful, Politicized Grant Program, Returning Agency to Core Mission of Helping Americans Recovering from Natural Disasters." News release, April 4, 2025. <https://www.fema.gov/press-release/20250404/fema-ends-wasteful-politicized-grant-program-returning-agency-core-mission>.

² Regional Plan Association. *Averting Crisis: Zoning to Create Resilient Homes for All*. New York: Regional Plan Association, April 2025. <https://rpa.org/work/reports/averting-crisis>.

Eliminating BRIC funding, especially for projects on the verge of breaking ground or already underway, is not only short-sighted but dangerous.

The funding cuts disproportionately affect New York City, where dense infrastructure and vulnerable populations magnify the risk of severe flooding. Among the projects now at risk are³:

- **\$50 million** for flood mitigation infrastructure in Central Harlem, home to schools, hospitals, elder care facilities, and thousands of low-income families.
- **\$50 million** for East Elmhurst to prevent stormwater overflow in a largely residential area hit hard during Hurricane Ida.
- **\$42.4 million** for coastal protection around the South Street Seaport, a vital economic and cultural hub of Lower Manhattan.
- **\$46.6 million** for the Kissena Corridor Cloudburst Hub, an integrated green infrastructure project in Queens.
- **\$13 million** to protect Hunts Point—critical to New York City’s food supply and emergency response capacity.
- **\$11.5 million** for storm surge barriers around the NYCHA Polo Grounds public housing and the adjacent P.S. 046 in Harlem.
- And many others, including nearly **\$20 million** in protection for public housing developments in Brooklyn, such as Sheepshead Bay, Nostrand, and Breukelen Houses.

Beyond New York City, FEMA’s reversal also threatens urgently needed projects across the state. This includes \$24 million for flood and ice jam mitigation along the Erie Canal in the Capital Region and \$731,000 for dam decommissioning and floodplain restoration in Westchester. Communities in Buffalo, slated to benefit from much-needed infrastructure modernization, will lose out on \$284,000 in critical funding for sustainable building construction support.

These are not theoretical threats. During Hurricane Ida, 14 New Yorkers lost their lives—11 drowned in basement apartments. Nearly a decade earlier, Superstorm Sandy devastated our state, claiming 48 lives in New York and causing billions in damage. Entire neighborhoods were left underwater, infrastructure was destroyed, and vulnerable communities were pushed to the brink. In December 2022, after a historic winter storm claimed 47 lives in Western New York, a report found that investments in building upgrades were critical to building resilience and preventing this kind of devastation during future storms.⁴ The projects now being cut by the Trump Administration were designed to prevent these levels of suffering from happening again.

³ Governor Kathy Hochul. "By the Numbers: Governor Hochul Updates New Yorkers on the Devastating Impact of Federal Cuts on Infrastructure and Community Resilience Projects Throughout New York." News release, April 8, 2025. <https://www.governor.ny.gov/news/numbers-governor-hochul-updates-new-yorkers-devastating-impact-federal-cuts-infrastructure-and>.

⁴ New York University Wagner School of Public Service. *Lessons Learned from the Buffalo Blizzard*. June 2023. https://wagner.nyu.edu/files/faculty/publications/Buffalo%20Blizzard%20Report%20-%20June2023_1.pdf

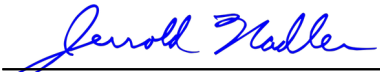
Canceling them now, especially as construction was poised to begin, sends a message that our communities' lives, safety, and futures are disposable. They are not.

FEMA has long recognized that every \$1 spent on mitigation saves at least \$6 in recovery.⁵ Many studies estimate the return to be even higher. Eliminating BRIC is fiscally irresponsible, particularly as disaster costs continue to climb year after year. It will leave state and local governments without the resources they need to prepare for known threats, resulting in greater loss of life, higher economic disruption, and greater federal disaster recovery costs in the future.

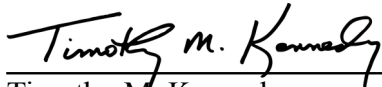
We urge you to restore BRIC funding and promptly reinstate the previously approved grants that communities are depending on. We also call for the immediate release of the \$1.6 billion in Disaster Relief Funds designated for New York, which remain withheld. These investments are critical to protecting lives and infrastructure. Delaying or denying them leaves New Yorkers more at risk—less protected, less resilient, and less equipped to recover when, not if, the next natural disaster strikes.

We stand united in calling on the Administration to restore this critical investment in disaster resilience and public safety. We appreciate your prompt attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,



Ferrol Nadler
Member of Congress



Timothy M. Kennedy
Member of Congress



Grace Meng
Member of Congress



Yvette D. Clarke
Member of Congress

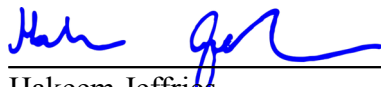


Dan Goldman
Member of Congress

⁵ Multi-Hazard Mitigation Council. *Natural Hazard Mitigation Saves: 2019 Report*. Washington, DC: National Institute of Building Sciences, 2019. <https://www.nibs.org/projects/natural-hazard-mitigation-saves-2019-report>.



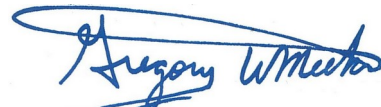
Ritchie Torres
Member of Congress



Hakeem Jeffries
Member of Congress



John W. Mannion
Member of Congress



Gregory W. Meeks
Member of Congress



George Latimer
Member of Congress



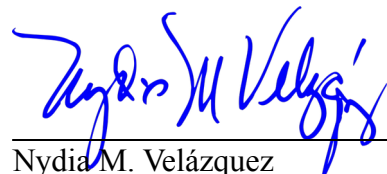
Patrick Ryan
Member of Congress



Paul D. Tonko
Member of Congress



Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez
Member of Congress



Nydia M. Velázquez
Member of Congress



Adriano Espaillat
Member of Congress



Thomas R. Suozzi
Member of Congress



Laura A. Gillen
Member of Congress