

The Honorable Charles Schumer  
Senate Majority Leader  
322 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Mitch McConnell  
Senate Minority Leader  
317 Russell Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Mike Johnson  
Speaker of the House  
H-232, The Capitol  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Hakeem Jeffries  
House Minority Leader  
H-204, The Capitol  
Washington, DC 20515

October 8, 2024

Dear Senate Majority Leader Schumer, Senate Minority Leader McConnell, House Speaker Johnson, and House Minority Leader Jeffries:

Hurricane Helene devastated the Southeastern United States after it made landfall on Sept. 26 as a Category 4 hurricane. At the time of this letter, more than 230 lives have been lost from the impacts of the storm, making Hurricane Helene the deadliest hurricane to hit the mainland United States since Hurricane Katrina in 2005. The damage from Florida to Virginia is of [“biblical” proportions](#), with entire roads, communication systems, and water lines wiped away.

Since the storm moved through the region, our communities have come together to clear fallen trees, supply drinking water and coordinate air drops of supplies to areas that are no longer accessible by road. However, our community resources can only extend so far. We need Congress to take action to ensure the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) has the resources they need to continue showing up for our communities through the long recovery process.

To date, Congress has failed to act on the Biden Administration's request of \$27 billion in disaster funding to address previous hurricane damage in the southeastern United States, as well as other disasters across the country and U.S. territories. In the negotiations for a continuing resolution to keep the government open past Sept. 30, we were happy that House Republicans included an additional \$10 billion for the Disaster Relief Fund and upfront annual appropriations for FEMA [in the six month funding extension](#), but were disappointed when that bipartisan funding did not make it into the final agreement signed by President Biden on Sept. 26. At that time, we knew that Hurricane Helene was likely to bring extensive damage, and FEMA's funding for the next three months would not be enough.

We have nearly two months left until the end of hurricane season with storms continuing to develop in the Caribbean and Atlantic Ocean. Just this week, Hurricane Milton is expected to pass over Florida on Wednesday as a Category 4 hurricane. FEMA's response to other possible disasters like wildfires, tornadoes, and other extreme weather adds further demands to their resources. The communities impacted by Hurricane Helene deserve a robust Disaster Relief Fund that is able to address our needs and the needs of all other disaster-impacted communities through the end of the year.

On Oct. 2, [Homeland Security Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas said](#) that FEMA does not have enough funding to address further disasters following Hurricane Helene. Congress needs to give FEMA and the Disaster Relief Fund the necessary resources to avoid any delays or possible reprioritizations as the fund is exhausted. Congress cannot wait to act and let counting disaster relief funds down to exact change get in the way of full federal support for people and communities who have lost everything.

**The undersigned 82 organizations ask that you immediately call Congress back to Washington in order to pass a disaster supplemental package that strengthens FEMA's Disaster Relief Fund and addresses the Administration's disaster assistance requests.** Providing FEMA the necessary funding at this extraordinary time will help communities stuck in FEMA's recovery backlog and will support others' recovery with strong federal support for months to come.

Sincerely,

Appalachian Voices

Appalachian Citizens' Law Center

350.org

The Alliance for Appalachia

Appalshop Inc

A Better Chance A Better Community

Between the Waters

Breathe Project

Center for Biological Diversity

Center for Progressive Reform

Charlotte Mecklenburg Climate Leaders

Charlotte Public Tree Fund

Chesapeake Climate Action Network Action Fund  
Christians For The Mountains  
Citizens Climate Lobby Tennessee  
Clean Fairfax  
Climate Action Alliance of the Valley  
The Climate Reality Project  
Coal River Mountain Watch  
The Community Climate Collaborative  
Community Farm Alliance  
Disability Law United  
Eastern Kentucky CLT  
Eastern PA Coalition for Abandoned Mine Reclamation (EPCAMR)  
Evergreen Action  
Fahe  
Florida Wildlife Federation  
Foundation for Appalachian Kentucky  
Gaston Cares  
Georgia Wildlife Federation  
The Help Center NC  
Highlander Research and Education Center  
Jobs with Justice East Tennessee  
Kentuckians For The Commonwealth  
Kentucky Heartwood  
Kentucky Waterways Alliance  
Latino Farmers & Ranchers International, Inc.  
LiKEN (Livelihoods Knowledge Exchange Network)  
Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy  
Lynnhaven River NOW  
Meals4Families  
Micah Six Eight Mission  
Mid-Ohio Valley Climate Action

Mon Metro Chamber of Commerce  
Mountain Association  
National Low Income Housing Coalition  
National Parks Conservation Association  
National Wildlife Federation  
The Neutral Ground Collective  
New River Land Trust  
North American Climate, Conservation and Environment (NACCE)  
North Carolina Disaster Response and Resilience Network  
The North Carolina Partnership for Children / Smart Start  
North Carolina Wildlife Federation  
Pasa Sustainable Agriculture  
PennFuture  
The Piedmont Environmental Council  
Potomac Riverkeeper Network  
Progressive Workers' Union (PWU) Executive Committee  
ReImagine Appalachia  
Roanoke Group, Sierra Club  
Rockfish Valley Foundation  
Rural Action  
RuralProgress  
SBP  
SERCAP, INC.  
Sierra Club  
South Carolina Wildlife Federation  
Southern Dharma  
Sowing Justice  
Team Rubicon  
Tennessee Citizens for Wilderness Planning  
Third Act Tennessee  
Three Rivers Waterkeeper

Union of Concerned Scientists

Unitarian Universalist Church of Roanoke

Virginia Conservation Network

Virginia Interfaith Power & Light

West Virginia Council of Churches

West Virginia Rivers Coalition

Wetlands Watch

Wild Virginia