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EDUCATION, AND RELATED AGENCIES

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September 1, 2021

President Joseph R. Biden
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20500

Administrator Deanne Criswell
Federal Emergency Management Agency
500 C Street S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20024

Dear Mr. President and Administrator Criswell,

I write in strong support of the State of California's request, along with other Western states, for a major disaster declaration in response to the ongoing western drought conditions. Federal resources and coordination are urgently needed to help our communities adapt and recover from the dual threats of extreme drought and wildfires.

The entirety of California is in drought—with almost fifty percent of the state experiencing the most severe level of drought, exceptional drought¹. This is forcing farmers in the Central Valley to tear up orchards and fallow fields that would otherwise feed America's families. During a pandemic where food supply chains have become inviolate, worsening food insecurity, this is simply unacceptable. Drought is also exacerbating a historically severe wildfire season that is destroying communities, producing unhealthy air quality, and already outpacing the size and scope of last year's wildfire season.

These drought conditions and high temperatures are expected to last through November of this year. In California, statewide rainfall totals for this year were less than 50 percent of the average and snowpack levels, which are critical to my state's reservoir supply levels, peaked at just 70 percent of the average. Given the long-term impacts this drought could have on our nation's food supply, a Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) drought disaster declaration would make funding available for our farmers to weather this crisis and is needed now more than ever.

It's clear that more investments are needed in longer term strategies to build resiliency in Western states to the effects of climate change—particularly wildfires and droughts. This FEMA drought declaration will be an important step to protect our farmers and agricultural communities. Given the severe impacts of this drought, I request an expeditious approval of this request.

Sincerely,



Josh Harder
Member of Congress

¹ [Current U.S. Drought Monitor Conditions for California](#), U.S. Drought Monitor.