

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

February 22, 2023

The Honorable Deanne Criswell
Administrator
Federal Emergency Management Agency
500 C Street, SW Washington, DC 20024

The Honorable Robert Fenton, Jr.
Administrator
FEMA, Region 9 1111 Broadway, #1200
Oakland, CA 94607

Dear Administrators Criswell and Fenton,

I am writing today to thank you for your quick response to the flooding in San Joaquin County. The Federal Emergency Declaration as well as the Major Disaster Declaration during the recent California Severe Winter Storms Disaster (DR-4683-CA) lessened the burden on my constituents as their lives were turned upside down. In addition, I applaud FEMA's decision to continue to operate Stockton's Disaster Recovery Center until all San Joaquin families receive their disaster relief. As a result of FEMA's support and partnership with San Joaquin County, our community is beginning to recover from the disastrous floods.

I also want to share some feedback from my constituents in order to improve your future disaster responses. First, the lengthy disaster aid application process is burdensome on constituents whose lives have been uprooted by flooding. In times of disaster where homes are sinking and uninhabitable, applications should be expedited and completed as soon as possible. Numerous San Joaquin families have stated how challenging it is to rebuild their lives while they wait weeks for assistance.

My constituents have also expressed frustration with FEMA's sequence of disaster aid delivery. As one of my constituents put it, "I first had to apply to FEMA, then I was referred to the Small Business Administration (SBA) only to get denied and sent back to FEMA." In a time of crisis, our application processes should be streamlined in order to avoid delays. The sequence of delivery would better serve San Joaquin residents if all FEMA relief options were exhausted prior to referring constituents to the SBA.

Finally, FEMA's rental assistance program has been helpful to many families who need a place to stay because their homes are damaged. Yet, this only addresses part of the problem. In tandem with rental assistance, residents should also be able to receive FEMA's home repair funding to rebuild their homes while they are temporarily relocated.

Surviving a natural disaster is one of the most difficult experiences our community has faced. Fixing the disaster aid process will increase the current 33% application acceptance rate ensuring every resident impacted by the storms gets the assistance they deserve.

Again, thank you for your continued support during and after the severe flooding in California's 9th congressional district. Your work has made a substantial difference in allowing

my community to recover from this disaster. I appreciate your consideration of these concerns and I look forward to working together to address these issues with the disaster aid process.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Josh Harder". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Josh Harder

Member of Congress