

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

August 3, 2024

Dear President Biden:

We write in strong support of Governor Scott's Major Disaster Declaration request to address the severe flooding caused by the remnants of Hurricane Beryl that occurred July 9 – 11, 2024—exactly one year after the most catastrophic flooding Vermont has seen in nearly a century. We urge you to quickly approve this request and to expedite all outstanding Public Assistance reimbursements, Hazard Mitigation projects, and buyouts from 2023 disasters (DR-4720-VT, DR-4744-VT, DR-4762-VT, and DR-4770-VT).

While precipitation from this storm was more localized than it was in July 2023, the impacts are still severe across counties in northern and central Vermont. Some of these counties are the same ones that were affected by severe flooding in July, August, and December 2023. Damages across eight rural counties meet county thresholds, and accordingly, Vermont is requesting Public Assistance for Addison, Caledonia, Chittenden, Essex, Lamoille, Orange, Orleans, and Washington counties, and Individual Assistance for Addison, Caledonia, Chittenden, Essex, Lamoille, Orleans, and Washington counties, along with Hazard Mitigation Assistance statewide.

More than five inches of rain fell in numerous towns, with the town of Walden receiving 7.25 inches of precipitation. This intense rainfall over a short period of time damaged railways, destroyed crops, and washed away roads, bridges, and culverts. It also damaged and, in some cases, completely destroyed homes, particularly in Plainfield and Barre. Some of these homes had suffered serious damage from the July 2023 flood. And most distressing of all, the floodwaters endangered human life: 118 people had to be rescued from homes and vehicles by swiftwater teams, and sadly, two Vermonters lost their lives.

With more frequent extreme weather events, all sectors have unfortunately had more practice in preparing for, and responding to, flooding. State and local governments, as well as Long-Term Recovery Groups, quickly mobilized following the storm, helping towns and homeowners with immediate needs. Vermont also continues to make strides in hazard mitigation efforts, with more than 170 federally-funded acquisitions and removals of flood-prone structures over the past several years. This work, which the state is committed to continuing with additional federal funds, was critical to mitigating storm impacts.

Vermont has experienced 15 federally declared natural disasters since 2014, including three floods in 2023 alone. These extreme weather events have devastated Vermont communities, who have not been able to recover from previous disasters before the next one hits. Many municipalities are still waiting on Public Assistance reimbursements for 2023 disasters, particularly the July 2023 flood, and do not have budgets that allow them to undertake more recovery work. For example, the small town of Moretown has only been reimbursed for approximately 6% of the damages incurred last year, and faces significant damage from the 2024 flooding. Similarly, Barre City, Barton, Hardwick, Lyndon, Middlesex, Plainfield, Richmond, Sheffield, St. Johnsbury, and Waterbury were among some of the communities hit hard by flooding this year while awaiting reimbursement from 2023. Likewise, some homeowners that sustained damage from the July 2024 flood are still waiting for buyouts from 2023 floods. We ask that you act swiftly and bring all available federal resources to bear—including immediately expediting reimbursements from 2023—to enable Vermont to fully recover from the devastation wrought over the last 12 months.

We greatly appreciate your prompt and positive consideration of this request.

Sincerely,



BERNARD SANDERS
United States Senator



PETER WELCH
United States Senator



BECCA BALINT
United States Representative

cc: The Honorable Deanne Criswell, FEMA Administrator