



August 8, 2025

The Honorable Jared Huffman
U.S. House of Representatives
2330 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative Huffman:

On behalf of the City of Santa Rosa, I would like to express my sincere gratitude for continued efforts to support community resiliency initiatives, which are vital to the safety and well-being of Santa Rosa residents. Your leadership in advancing federal policies that support local preparedness and recovery efforts has been instrumental in helping our community rebuild stronger after devastating wildfires.

As you well know, Santa Rosa has faced significant challenges from natural disasters, most notably the devastating Tubbs Fire in October 2017. This catastrophic wildfire destroyed over 5,600 structures in our city alone, including entire neighborhoods like Coffey Park and Fountaingrove. The personal and economic toll was immense—twenty-two lives were lost in Sonoma County, thousands of residents were displaced, and our community sustained billions of dollars in damage. The Tubbs Fire served as a stark reminder that local governments are truly on the front lines when disasters strike, bearing the immediate responsibility for emergency response, evacuation, sheltering, and the long road to recovery.

Our post-Tubbs Fire resilience initiatives have included implementing enhanced building codes and fire-resistant construction standards, expanding our emergency alert systems and evacuation procedures, creating defensible space programs, upgrading critical infrastructure to withstand extreme weather events, and developing comprehensive wildfire preparedness and response protocols. These investments have already proven their value, as demonstrated during subsequent fire seasons when our enhanced preparedness measures helped minimize damage and save lives.

The increasing frequency of extreme weather events affecting both our community and others nationwide underscores the necessity for robust federal support in resilience initiatives. Investments in community resiliency are directly linked to taxpayer savings at the federal level, with studies indicating that each dollar allocated toward preparedness and mitigation yields an estimated sixfold reduction in disaster response and recovery expenditures. By proactively enhancing resilience efforts in communities such as Santa Rosa, significant federal resources can be conserved resources that would otherwise be required for emergency response, FEMA declarations, and extended recovery operations.

This is why we support federal legislation that recognizes the key role local governments play in disaster mitigation and recovery. The City of Santa Rosa strongly supports the bi-partisan FEMA Reform Act (HR 4669) and its comprehensive approach to improving federal disaster response and mitigation policy. Having experienced firsthand the complexities and gaps in the current system, we appreciate this legislation's potential to strengthen our nation's disaster preparedness and response capabilities.

However, based on our direct experience navigating a major disaster, we believe several modifications would significantly enhance the legislation's effectiveness:



- **Ensure Pre-Approved State Plans Have Appropriate Local Input:** The City fully supports the proposed changes to mitigation planning in HR 4669 to ensure that states submit projects from every county. However, we also recognize that not all jurisdictions receive the support that Santa Rosa and other local governments receive in California. Therefore, we recommend amending the current draft to clarify that more than one project may be submitted within a county, especially in those areas at greatest risk, including areas that have experienced multiple disasters. In addition, we recommend amending the current draft to allow local governments to submit projects directly to FEMA when a State is unable or unwilling to do so.
- **Direct and Equitable Distribution and Technical Assistance:** Local governments, especially those in high-risk areas with demonstrated vulnerability through multiple disaster declarations, must receive their fair share of federal funding. Additionally, robust technical and capacity assistance should be provided to ensure that small and mid-size local governments have the resources and expertise needed to develop competitive projects and secure inclusion on State Pre-Approved project lists.
- **Mandatory Federal Mitigation Funding:** We urge that federal mitigation funding, including pre-disaster mitigation programs, be made mandatory rather than discretionary. Communities at high risk—those that have received multiple disaster declarations—should receive guaranteed access to mitigation resources.

These federal programs play a critical role by equipping local governments with the financial resources necessary to implement large-scale resilience initiatives that would otherwise be beyond their means.

We sincerely appreciate your ongoing leadership, which has been instrumental in our recovery and has strengthened our region's capacity to face future challenges. The City of Santa Rosa remains committed to collaborating with you to ensure that federal disaster policy adequately addresses the needs of communities nationwide, particularly those affected by multiple disasters and ongoing high-risk conditions.

Thank you for your steadfast commitment to Santa Rosa and to communities nationwide. We stand ready to support your continued efforts in any way we can.

Sincerely,

Mark Stapp

Mayor, City of Santa Rosa

Thank you, as always!