

**Congress of the United States**  
**Washington, DC 20515**

February 14, 2025

The Honorable Kristi Noem  
Secretary  
U.S. Department of Homeland Security  
3017 7<sup>th</sup> Street, SW  
Washington, DC

Dear Secretary Noem,

The Committees are seeking information related to the possible freezing of grant funding within the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). According to a February 11, 2025, report from NBC News, “(a) senior official at the Federal Emergency Management Agency instructed subordinates to freeze funding for a wide array of grant programs Monday,” February 10, 2025.<sup>1</sup> The article cites an email with the subject line, “URGENT: Holds on awards,” which purportedly instructs FEMA employees to “put financial holds on all of your awards—all open awards, all years (2021, 2022, 2023, 2024).”

FEMA federal assistance funding appropriated by Congress supports counterterrorism, transportation and port security, fire departments and other first responders, state and local emergency management, border security, flood mapping, alerts and warnings to the public, and more. These funds make our communities more safe and secure, and enjoy bicameral and bipartisan support. There is no question as to Congressional intent that FEMA federal assistance be quickly provided to eligible applicants, with annual appropriations language requiring many of these grants to be announced, applied for, and awarded within 205 days of the date of enactment.

Recipients of FEMA grants count on these funds to provide essential services for the American people across virtually every State, Territory, and Tribe. They fund firefighters, emergency medical technicians, and the equipment they use. They harden our infrastructure to protect against acts of terror. They allow for the identification of flood risk so we don’t build in flood plains. They protect our religious institutions from threats of violence. They fund the infrastructure to notify the public of impending danger. They build out national emergency management capabilities, such as urban search and rescue teams that respond to disasters across the country in times of need.

---

<sup>1</sup> Jonathan Allen, *FEMA official ignores judge’s latest order, demands freeze on grant funding*, NBC News, February 11, 2025, <https://www.nbcnews.com/politics/donald-trump/fema-official-ignores-judge-order-freeze-grant-funding-rcna191674>

Any “financial holds” on these funds would be both reckless and in contravention of appropriations law. Even the slightest delay in the disbursement of awarded funds can have devastating effects on our communities. If any such holds are in place, they should be lifted immediately absent extremely compelling circumstances that have not yet been communicated to the Committees. As such, please provide written responses to the following questions, including any associated documentation:

- Were any such holds placed on FEMA grant programs, and if so, are such holds still in place?
- Under what authority or authorities were such holds implemented?
- If any such holds were or are in place, what funds were withheld and over what time period(s), split by both program and recipients?
- What, if any, reviews were conducted, are currently underway, or are planned with respect to these funds?
- How are these reviews being performed, what office is performing them, and how and when will these results be communicated to the Committee?

In addition, the Committees are seeking information following recent news out of FEMA related to the administration of grant programs and the firing of agency personnel.

On February 11, 2025, we understand that four FEMA employees were fired for activities related to the Shelter and Services Program (SSP), and funding that was drawn down by New York City government pursuant to their SSP grant award. In a statement to the Associated Press on February 10, 2025, your spokesperson, Trisha McLaughlin, stated that “(i)ndividuals who circumvented leadership and unilaterally made this payment will be fired and held accountable.”<sup>2</sup> However, you have not provided any evidence that the actions of these employees were illegal, misaligned with the law, or contrary to the intent of Congress.

On January 28, 2025, you issued a memorandum, *Direction on Grants to Non-governmental Organizations*. In that memorandum, you directed that “all Department grant disbursements and assessments of grant applications that: (a) go to non-profit organizations or for which non-profit organizations are eligible, and (b) touch in any way on immigration, are on hold pending review, except to the extent required by controlling legal authority.” The memorandum did not impact grants to state, local, tribal, or territorial governments, or grants for which those governments are eligible.

We understand that FEMA paused disbursements to non-governmental organizations (NGOs) awarded grants under SSP pursuant to the aforementioned memorandum. However, because the

---

<sup>2</sup> Rebecca Santana and Cedar Attanasio, *FEMA says it’s halting payments for migrant housing in New York after Musk blasts money for hotels*, Associated Press, February 10, 2025, <https://apnews.com/article/fema-migrant-funding-new-york-hotels-immigration-elon-musk-doge-268ca7eda43011a501dfad0fa88a4775>

memorandum did not apply to grants to state, local, tribal, or territorial governments, it did not impact SSP grants to New York City government. SSP grants to New York City and other recipients were awarded pursuant to enacted appropriations by this Committee<sup>3</sup> and the applicable Notices of Funding Opportunity (NOFOs), and were subject to budget submissions and spend plans requiring approval by FEMA prior to funding drawdowns by the recipients.

Considering that: (1) your January 28, 2025, memorandum did not impact SSP grants to New York City government; (2) the awarding of funds to New York City government were made before the current administration took office on January 20, 2025; (3) the awarding of SSP grants, including to New York City government, were implemented in accordance with enacted law and Congressional intent; and (4) mechanisms were in place for New York City government to draw down funding for eligible expenses per their approved budget and spend plan; what is the justification for the firing of the four FEMA employees? Further, what leadership was “circumvented,” and in what way(s) did they “unilaterally” make “this payment?”

Please provide responses to the bulleted grant questions immediately, including supporting documentation (and dates), along with any written guidance or direction related to such holds. If guidance or direction was provided via non-written means, please provide a written description of such guidance or direction. Please provide responses to the SSP-related questions by February 21, 2025.

Sincerely,



---

Christopher S. Murphy  
Ranking Member  
Subcommittee on Homeland Security  
Committee on Appropriations  
United States Senate



---

Lauren Underwood  
(Acting) Ranking Member  
Subcommittee on Homeland Security  
Committee on Appropriations  
U.S. House of Representatives

---

<sup>3</sup> Public Law 117-328 and Public Law 118-47