

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-0908

August 3, 2023

The Honorable Deanne Criswell
Administrator
Federal Emergency Management Agency
500 C Street SW
Washington, D.C. 20472

Dear Administrator Criswell:

We write with concern about the current funding level of the Disaster Relief Fund (DRF), which according to the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), could be exhausted well before the end of the fiscal year, September 30, 2023. This shortfall comes amid hurricane season, when just one storm can require much time and resources from FEMA and its programs.

On July 13, 2023, you testified in front of the House Homeland Security Subcommittee on Emergency Management and Technology¹ that you expect the DRF to run out of funds by late August. FEMA's latest monthly DRF report,² issued July 10, 2023, also projected a \$133 million deficit in August, growing to \$8.6 billion by late September. However, last week, FEMA stated the DRF levels "are more than adequate to execute immediate response and recovery efforts to any incidents which may occur. At this time, we have no expectations of impacts to any programs." These are two conflicting statements that require clarification.

Absent administration action, in June, we introduced the *Disaster Relief Fund Replenishment Act* to provide \$11.5 billion in needed DRF funding. Floridians know that responding to natural disasters is a team effort, which requires every level of government to be ready to assist families in need at a moment's notice. This good bill will ensure the federal government can uphold its obligation to quickly deploy emergency funding and resources to communities and Americans impacted by natural disasters.

The uncertainty resulting from the DRF's projected shortfall two months into hurricane season is unacceptable. The Biden administration has been completely silent on the need to act. A deficit to the DRF cannot be ignored and we demand action before a crisis emerges and the American people suffer from the administration's poor

¹ [House Homeland Security Subcommittee on Emergency Management and Technology Holds Hearing on the Future of FEMA \(cq.com\)](#)

² [CQ](#)

The Honorable Deanne Criswell
August 3, 2023
Page Two

planning. Or, as we've seen previously, the administration uses a natural disaster and the communities in need as leverage in their political games. Floridians and Puerto Ricans have already been preparing for potential storms and this administration needs to do the same. Therefore, we ask that you please provide written responses to the following questions:

1. What is the current funding level of the DRF, and what are the estimated monthly expenditures that are being drawn from the fund?
2. Does FEMA still project a deficit to the DRF in mid-August?
3. Does FEMA intend to cease reimbursements to state and localities when the DRF levels hit \$2 million?
 - a. If so, has this been communicated to states and localities in advance?
4. Does FEMA currently have sufficient funds to cover multiple disasters during hurricane season?
5. What action has FEMA taken to prevent a deficit in the DRF?
6. What accounts/expenditures take precedence over others in a deficit scenario?
7. What communication has FEMA had with the White House to prevent a shortfall in the DRF?

We look forward to your response and working together to keep Florida, and our nation, prepared during this hurricane season.

Sincerely,



Rick Scott
United States Senator



Marco Rubio
United States Senator