

Congress of the United States  
Washington, DC 20510

August 9, 2023

President Joseph R. Biden  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania, N.W.  
Washington, DC 20500

Dear President Biden:

We request your help to expedite all federal assistance possible to help Hawai‘i recover from ongoing devastating fires in Maui and Hawai‘i Counties. Communities in both counties will need substantial support to recover from fires that are devastating homes and businesses, along with some of the State’s most iconic cultural and economic centers.

Responders on the ground need federal support for logistics and transportation during and after the response effort, including mobilization of assistance under Emergency Management Assistance Compact and other state-to-state assistance and resources. For your reference, we are reaching out directly to the Secretaries of Departments with disaster and emergency authorities for relevant aid, and we will continue to update our request for federal assistance as events transpire. Further, we ask that you consider these disastrous fires in the formulation of any request you might make for domestic disaster funding—including investments to enhance the response and logistical capabilities of federal agencies to operate under the adverse circumstances caused by natural disasters.

On August 8, 2023, fires caught and spread under red flag weather conditions in the Kohala region of Hawai‘i County, and in western and central Maui. Throughout the day, both counties were able to keep fire under control, but in the evening, the situation turned uncontrollable for Maui. All efforts are currently hampered by high winds, damaged infrastructure, disruptions to utilities and communications, and the fire itself. Notably, the Maui County Fire Department estimated approximately 100 people entered the water at the beach in Lahaina, Maui to escape the advance of the fire, hospitals are under stress to keep up with injured residents, and eye witnesses have reported almost total devastation. In Hawai‘i County, the Kohala Ranch fire burned in excess of 600 acres of state and private land. It threatened approximately 200 homes in and around Kohala Ranch, in addition to a volunteer fire department, local transmission lines, and an AT&T Cell tower in the area. Mandatory evacuations took place for approximately 500 people. The situation is evolving, and a full report of the damage is not yet possible.

We request your urgent attention on the following items to assist with the response on Maui and Hawai‘i Counties:

- Issuing a federal disaster declaration upon the request of the State to enable FEMA emergency response and recovery programs; and
- Exercise of your Title 32 authority upon the request of the State to allow federal payment for the mobilization of the HI-ANG to respond to and recover from the fires.

We are grateful for the prompt attention that the federal government has given Hawai'i for prior disasters, and we hope that you will continue to support our state's needs in response to these most recent disastrous fires.

Sincerely,



BRIAN SCHATZ  
United States Senator



MAZIE K. HIRONO  
United States Senator



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ED CASE  
Member of Congress



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Member of Congress

Cc: The Hon. Alejandro N. Mayorkas, Secretary, Department of Homeland Security  
The Hon. Deanne Criswell, Administrator, Federal Emergency Management Agency  
General Daniel R. Hokanson, Chief, National Guard Bureau