

Congress of the United States  
Washington, DC 20510

January 20, 2022

President Joseph R. Biden  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW  
Washington, DC 20500

Dear President Biden:

We write in support of Governor Ige’s request for a major disaster declaration for the State of Hawai‘i based on the severe weather, flooding, and landslides that occurred from December 4-10, 2021. Specifically, the request is for the Hazard Mitigation Grant Program for the entire state, as well as Public Assistance for Maui County and the City and County of Honolulu. The impacts from this prolonged weather event were significant, and we urge you to declare a major disaster to speed recovery from the damages it caused.

This storm system, known as a “Kona low,” is a subtropical cyclone that occurs during the cool season in the Pacific and is characterized by heavy rains, flash floods, landslides, high winds, large surf and swell, waterspouts, severe thunderstorms, and even hail. The main rain band of the Kona low hit Hawai‘i County on December 5, 2021, then slowly moved across the island chain until it cleared Kaua‘i County on December 8, 2021. Over the 72-hour period the maximum rainfall total reported on O‘ahu was 12.83 inches of rain, with a single-day record of 7.92 inches of rain being set on December 6, 2021. During that same period, the maximum rainfall on Maui was 12.89 inches of rain. Hawai‘i County received a maximum of 14.26 inches of rain, with peak gusts greater than 100 miles per hour recorded on the summit of Mauna Kea, prompting a blizzard warning. In addition, the Kona low drove near-shore waves of up to 30 feet, causing coastal inundation.

Maui County and the City and County of Honolulu were both forced to close roads and schools on account of flooding, downed trees, and power outages. In Maui County, reported impacts included: 22,000 residents experienced extended power outages; all Maui public schools closed; and severe flooding rushing down the slopes of Haleakalā resulted in the closure of Pi‘ilani Highway, causing the evacuation of residents, damage to homes in the Maui Meadows subdivision, and washing away of vehicles. In the City and County of Honolulu, reported impacts included flood damage to the Iwilei power substation, causing power outages to downtown Honolulu businesses and residents, while waist-deep water forced closure of one section of Interstate H-1, the state’s busiest highway.

These impacts have disrupted lives and damaged property, forcing some residents to evacuate their homes. Recovery from this destructive storm is further complicated by the continuing impacts from the COVID-19 pandemic and the contamination of drinking water at Joint Base Pearl Harbor-Hickam and surrounding communities. As such, the people of Hawai‘i need all

available assistance from the federal government to recover from the storm amid these ongoing crises.

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 needs resulting from recent severe weather.

Sincerely,



BRIAN SCHATZ  
United States Senator

MAZIE K. HIRONO  
United States Senator



ED CASE  
Member of Congress



KAIALI'I KAHELE  
Member of Congress

cc: Ms. Deanne Criswell, Administrator, Federal Emergency Management Agency