

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20510

July 23, 2020

President Donald J. Trump
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania, NW
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear Mr. President:

We request your immediate intervention and support for Hawai'i as Hurricane Douglas approaches. Current forecasts show a significant chance of landfall, and so we have a narrow window of opportunity to prepare. The winds, rain, surf, and storm surge associated with Hurricane Douglas pose threats to homes, businesses, and infrastructure. However, the usual array of response activities—evacuation, shelter, and emergency operations—will expose residents to increased risk of COVID infection.

With the time remaining before the forecasted landfall, we can take steps that will improve outcomes for Hawai'i residents. Close coordination among federal, state, and county officials will make it possible to have supplies, personnel, and plans in place for Hurricane Douglas. Federal support is especially critical at this juncture because so many state and county emergency management and response personnel are already committed to the COVID pandemic. These actions will also lay the foundation for preparedness throughout the 2020 hurricane season. Moreover, the lessons learned from Hawai'i can help inform efforts nationally.

Finally, we ask that you consider using local assets and suppliers whenever possible to help support the state's economy during a very difficult time. For example, hotels and other buildings that are currently under-used may be useful to shelter evacuees and responders. Similarly, local agricultural producers and fishing vessels may be able to help supply emergency food and nutrition needs.

With the aforementioned concerns in mind, we request your help to provide federal resources, personnel, and expertise to resolve the following issues:

Deployment of Hurricane Hunters. Forecasting relies on good data, and the best data for tropical cyclones like Douglas comes from the in situ observations of Hurricane Hunters. Deploying both P-3 and G-IV class aircraft or their equivalents will ensure that forecasters have the best possible information to advise emergency managers and responders.

COVID Support for Emergency Operations. Management and response personnel will be at heightened risk during this event because they will have to be in close proximity to one another, thereby increasing the risks for transmission. To minimize risk, they will need:

- personal protective equipment (PPE);
- industrial hygiene supplies for their workplaces;
- alternate shelter to quarantine from their families;
- screening and testing to identify and react promptly to infection; and
- medical support in the event of infection.

COVID Support for Evacuation and Shelter. The needs for evacuation and shelter activities are similar to those for responders, but scaled up for larger numbers of people who will likely need additional support to practice stricter hygiene and social distancing protocols. In addition to the aforementioned items, we also request:

- additional shelter facilities to support social distancing among evacuees, including the consideration of currently-underused facilities like hotels;
- special screening protocols to help identify and manage evacuees who may already be infected, or who are at greater risk if they become infected; and
- additional shelter personnel for the enhanced operations described above.

Food and Nutrition Assistance. The COVID pandemic has disrupted traditional food supply chains and resulted in unprecedented participation by Hawai'i residents in emergency food programs. Disasters such as Hurricane Douglas have the potential to exacerbate the need for food assistance and further disrupt food distribution networks. To ensure food security for impacted residents we request consideration of the following:

- adequate stockpiles of shelf-stable food and water;
- collaboration with agricultural producers, fishermen, feeding organizations, and local distributors to incorporate fresh food into emergency provisions; and
- a logistical analysis of where to pre-position supplies to support the highest impacted areas, and how to ensure supply chains in the event of damage to road and transportation infrastructure.

Enhanced Assessment and Rebuilding Functions. The COVID pandemic makes it imperative to return residents to their homes and restore infrastructure as quickly as possible. Now more than ever, residents need their homes so they can observe social distancing and limit their risk of infection. Similarly, the roads that ensure distribution of necessary supplies throughout the state are also critical so that people are able to shelter in their homes. Thus, we ask your help for a rapid assessment of damages from Douglas, together with quick access to resources to rebuild.

State and county officials need help from their federal partners at the Federal Emergency Management Agency, Department of Health and Human Services, and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. We request your urgent attention to ensure these agencies respond quickly and compassionately to protect the people of Hawai'i.

Sincerely,



BRIAN SCHATZ
United States Senator



MAZIE K. HIRONO
United States Senator



TULSI GABBARD
Member of Congress



ED CASE
Member of Congress

cc: The Honorable Alex M. Azar II, Secretary, Department of Health and Human Services
The Honorable Sonny Perdue, Secretary, Department of Agriculture
The Honorable Peter T. Gaynor, Administrator, Federal Emergency Management Agency
The Honorable Neil Jacobs, Ph.D., Assistant Secretary of Commerce for Environmental
Observation and Prediction, performing the duties of Under Secretary of Commerce
for Oceans and Atmosphere