



NATIONAL LOW INCOME HOUSING COALITION

January 29, 2025

The Honorable John Thune
Senate Majority Leader
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Chuck Schumer
Senate Minority Leader
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

To Majority Leader Thune and Minority Leader Schumer:

On behalf of the Disaster Housing Recovery Coalition (DHRC), led by the National Low Income Housing Coalition (NLIHC), **we urge the Senate to hold a separate vote on the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) appropriations bill, and pause additional funding for Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) and Customs and Border Patrol (CBP) given the ongoing and widespread concerns about their actions in vulnerable and marginalized communities.** Concerns over funding for the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) should not be used to justify enacting the DHS bill in its current form.

NLIHC is dedicated to achieving racially and socially equitable public policy that ensures people with the lowest incomes in the United States have quality homes that are accessible and affordable in communities of their choice. NLIHC leads the DHRC of more than 900 national, state, and local organizations, including many working directly with disaster-impacted communities and with first-hand experience recovering after disasters. The DHRC works to ensure that federal disaster recovery efforts reach all the lowest-income and most marginalized survivors.

The DHRC recognizes that ICE and CBP's actions and the rationale officials have provided to defend and fund them, particularly rhetoric around funding the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), all undermine the minimally necessary conditions for just public policy in the areas of affordable housing, income inequality, and disaster housing recovery.

While concern for FEMA funding is appreciated, the agency has funding and capacity to meet disaster-related obligations in the near-term. Currently, FEMA's Disaster Relief Fund (DRF) includes around \$9 billion. Given the current amount of funding available to FEMA, the lack of a DHS appropriations bill does not harm the agency's ability to respond to disasters currently. In the event of a partial shutdown, the vast majority of FEMA's workforce are considered essential workers, so they will continue to carry out their responsibilities even during a government shutdown.

The FY26 DHS funding bill is also not the only way for Congress to provide funds to FEMA. Congress can pass an emergency disaster supplemental spending bill that provides funds to FEMA and HUD's long-term

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recovery program, the Community Development Block Grant-Disaster Recovery (CDBG-DR) program. Congress previously passed these supplemental bills after large disasters to ensure adequate funding for disaster recovery efforts; however, while debate continues around the FY26 DHS appropriations bill and the importance of FEMA funding, Congress has yet to pass an emergency disaster supplemental for the communities impacted by the 2025 California Wildfires and other 2025 and 2026 disasters. Adequately funding the nation's disaster recovery system starts with Congress taking up the long-overdue emergency disaster supplemental for communities continuing to recover.

Concerns around FEMA funding should not be used to justify approving the FY26 DHS appropriations bill in its current form. Given its roster of essential workers and current funding levels, FEMA will be able to continue its mission in the short-term while Congress renegotiates the DHS spending bill. Congress also has multiple options to fund FEMA, including via a disaster supplemental spending bill – something already needed to provide critical long-term recovery funds to areas impacted by disasters in 2025 and 2026. We urge the Senate to hold a separate vote on the DHS funding bill and issue a pause on funding for ICE and CBP.

Sincerely,

The Disaster Housing Recovery Coalition