

Dear Representative:

We, the undersigned groups and individuals, support creation of a National Disaster Safety Board. Natural hazards are occurring with increasing frequency and intensity, and disasters continue to cause preventable deaths. After new each incident, many will talk of “lessons learned”—but now is the time to turn lessons into action.

Currently, the lack of systematic learning from past incidents makes our communities—and the nation as a whole—more vulnerable to future disasters. In particular, this shortcoming disproportionately affects low-income communities and communities of color, as disasters exacerbate existing inequalities. Given the scale of the disasters that have hit this country, from Hurricane Katrina, which struck 15 years ago last summer, through Hurricanes Sandy, Harvey, and Maria, the many wildfires and floods, and the risks associated with climate change, it is clear we need a better approach to learning and improving our resilience.

Modeled after the successful National Transportation Safety Board, a National Disaster Safety Board would conduct independent reviews of major disasters, investigating the underlying causes of deaths and injuries, as well as displacement, economic damages, and other human impacts. Importantly, the Board’s goal would be to make recommendations to prevent or mitigate similar tragic outcomes in the future, focusing on the systems and structures that turn natural hazards into human catastrophes.

It is essential for us to understand the preceding conditions of disasters, identify shortcomings, and change policies and programs so we are better prepared in the future. A National Disaster Safety Board can achieve this in an objective and independent manner—conducting reviews not to assign blame, but to assess the effectiveness of the nation’s actions and identify ways we can improve.

We ask you to support the National Disaster Safety Board, and we look forward to working with Congress as it takes steps to increase the country’s resilience now and into the future.

Sincerely,

National Organizations and Coalitions

Alliance of Nurses for a Healthy Environment

Anthropocene Alliance

Association of State Floodplain Managers

Bipartisan Policy Center Action

Enterprise Community Partners

Habitat for Humanity International

Insurance Institute for Business & Home Safety

National Low Income Housing Coalition

Natural Resources Defense Council

The Nature Conservancy
Surfrider Foundation
Union of Concerned Scientists

Regional, State, and Local Organizations

350 Ventura Climate Hub (California)
A Community Voice - Louisiana (Louisiana)
Citizens Committee for Flood Relief (Missouri)
Coalition for Wetlands and Forests (New York)
Conejo Climate Coalition (California)
Duwamish River CleanUp Coalition (Washington)
Fair Share Housing Center (New Jersey)
Flood Victims of Richwood (Texas)
Groundswell Charleston (South Carolina)
Gullah/Geechee Sea Island Coalition (South Carolina)
Horry County Rising (South Carolina)
Houston Residents Against Flooding (Texas)
LowCountry Flooded States of America (South Carolina)
NC Inclusive Disaster Recovery Network's Advocacy Team (North Carolina)
New Alpha Community Development Corporation (South Carolina)
Ocean City NJ Flooding (New Jersey)
Portland Harbor Community Coalition (Oregon)
Rebuild By Design (New York)
Residents Working Against Huron River Flooding (Michigan)
Rosewood Strong (South Carolina)
Rural Forward NC, a program of the Foundation for Health Leadership & Innovation (North Carolina)
Save James Island (South Carolina)
Saving Island Green Wildlife & Beyond (South Carolina)
South Carolina Coastal Conservation League (South Carolina)

Southern Environmental Law Center (Alabama, Georgia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, and Virginia)

Stop Elmhurst Flooding (Illinois)

West Street Recovery (Texas)

Disaster Experts, Scholars, and Academic Institutions

Craig Fugate

Former FEMA Administrator (2009-2017)

Gilbert M. Gaul

Author, *The Geography of Risk: Rising Seas, Epic Storms and the Cost of America's Coasts*

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