August 30, 2017

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Majority Leader
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

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

The Honorable Paul Ryan
Speaker
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Minority Leader
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 201515

Dear Majority Leader McConnell, Minority Leader Schumer, Speaker Ryan, and Minority Leader Pelosi:

On behalf of the 19,000 cities and towns represented by the National League of Cities, I am writing to urge Congress to take immediate action to help cities across the country prepare for and recover from the devastating impacts of flooding.

Once again, we are witness to the real consequences of extreme weather events where cities in Texas and Louisiana are facing unprecedented levels of rainfall and storm damage that is destroying properties and putting lives at risk. Unfortunately, they are not alone. This year, cities in California, Nevada, Missouri, Illinois, Indiana, Ohio, Oklahoma, and Arkansas also experienced widespread flooding events. According to the U.S. Geological Survey, since January, more than 118 flood related alerts were issued to cities across the country, and we still have four months left in the year. We are asking Congress to take three key actions to help cities prepare for and quickly recover from future flooding events.

First, Congress must reauthorize the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) as soon as possible to help homeowners and businesses across the country, and particularly those currently impacted by the devastating flooding in the aftermath of Hurricane Harvey. Unless Congress reauthorizes the NFIP by September 30, 2017 to keep flood insurance rates affordable for primary, non-primary and business properties while balancing the fiscal solvency of the program, millions of homeowners and businesses will lose their flood insurance coverage.

Second, Congress must act quickly to help cities in Texas and Louisiana recover from the devastation caused by the Hurricane Harvey. Congress should immediately pass an emergency spending package that will enable local governments in the impacted areas to:

- Help homeowners, renters and businesses get assistance to support their recovery from flood impacts.
- Restore and improve infrastructure in the interests of public health and safety, community quality of life, and long-term resilience.
• Assist in the economic recovery by connecting affected businesses with resources to help them recoup quickly from flood impacts, and to support long-term economic vitality of the community.

Third, we urge Congress to negotiate higher budget allocations for the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and the Department of Homeland Security’s Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) to provide additional resources for flood mitigation assistance in FY 2018 without reducing funds for existing programs. While the benefits from flood mitigation outweigh the costs by as much as five to one, funding flood mitigation programs are a challenge for many local governments. Cities need additional assistance from federal government programs such as those administered by HUD and DHS to reduce the financial burden on local governments.

By building stronger more resilient communities, we can reduce the potential for future losses from flooding. One of the most direct benefits from flood mitigation is that communities could receive a significant discount of up to 45 percent on flood insurance rates. Additional benefits to communities include:

• Avoided property losses
• Avoided business & education interruption
• Avoided loss of critical infrastructure
• Revitalized neighborhoods
• Improved public spaces
• Enhanced public safety
• Enjoyed ecosystem benefits
• Increased competitiveness for the community

Thank you for your support of these three critical issues. NLC looks forward to working with you to reauthorize the NFIP to ensure the solvency of the program while keeping rates affordable, help our cities in Texas and Louisiana recover from this natural disaster, and help mitigate the flood risks in the thousands of other cities across the country that could face catastrophic flooding.

Sincerely,

Matt Zone  
President, National League of Cities  
Fifteenth Ward Councilmember  
Cleveland, Ohio