

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

April 10, 2020

Peter Gaynor
Administrator
Federal Emergency Management Agency
500 C St. S.W.
Washington, DC 20024

Dear Administrator Gaynor:

We write in strong support of the attached letters from Indian Tribes located in New Mexico outlining significant concerns about the public health and economic impact of the novel coronavirus 2019 (COVID-19) outbreak. We respectfully request that you take prompt action on these requests, and all additional requests from Indian Tribes in New Mexico, to increase the federal cost-share to 100 percent for all eligible emergency protective measures undertaken by tribal communities, as either Public Assistance (PA) recipients or subrecipients of PA awards pursuant to New Mexico's major disaster declaration.

During an April 1, 2020 phone call with Senator Heinrich, you made a commitment to take the necessary measures to protect tribal communities in New Mexico from COVID-19, including a thorough review of the cost-sharing arrangements concerning federal funds provided under the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act, 42 U.S.C. 5121-5207 (the Stafford Act). Therefore, we urge prompt approval of 100 percent federal cost-share for all Indian Tribes in New Mexico. Additionally, the issue of increasing the federal cost-share for tribes was raised in a New Mexico congressional delegation letter sent to you and President Trump dated March 30, 2020.

The guidance issued by FEMA to tribes on March 26, 2020 states that, "due to the incredible burden and stress on all American citizens from this unprecedented event, FEMA is looking to consolidate resources and processes in order to serve as many communities as quickly and efficiently as possible." Further, FEMA's guidance to tribes "encouraged tribal governments to work with their respective state or states for assistance." Given the unprecedented nature of this pandemic, we ask that all Indian Tribes in New Mexico, regardless of whether they have an independent declaration or fall under the State of New Mexico's declaration, receive the benefit of a 100 percent federal cost-share.

Indian tribes in New Mexico are taking the necessary response measures to protect their communities from COVID-19, including the closure of tribally-owned business entities in order to curb the spread of this virus, and will not be able to assume a non-Federal cost share. Native communities deserve full and complete protection of their resources, land, and livelihoods. Recovering from this pandemic will require a full and coordinated approach and increasing the federal cost-share to 100 percent for Indian Tribes in New Mexico will help ensure tribal governments have the essential resources to save lives and to protect the public health and safety of their tribes.

Thank you for your prompt attention to this important issue.

Sincerely,

s/ Tom Udall
Tom Udall
United States Senator

s/ Martin Heinrich
Martin Heinrich
United States Senator