

September 7, 2017

Mr. Gary D. Cohn
National Economic Council

Mr. Mick Mulvaney
Office of Management and Budget

Mr. Thomas Bossert
Executive Office of the President

Dear Mr. Cohn, Mr. Mulvaney and Mr. Bossert:

On behalf of The Pew Charitable Trusts and the R Street Institute, we are writing to express our support for stronger and tougher flood-ready infrastructure standards. The recent devastation caused by Hurricane Harvey underscores that, more than ever, the country needs a pragmatic and prudent disaster risk management strategy that will safeguard the nation's infrastructure, protect businesses and communities, and conserve taxpayer resources to ensure we don't pay to rebuild something twice.

We can no longer afford inaction. Federal flood-related disasters have cost American taxpayers approximately \$51 billion between 2005 and May 2017 just from the Federal Emergency Management Agency's Public Assistance spending alone, which includes dollars spent to repair, replace, or restore disaster-damaged publicly-owned facilities. This is in addition to the National Flood Insurance Program's growing debt of nearly \$25 billion and other federal disaster expenditures that are spread across 17 agencies. Further, the business case for making investments in preparedness before disasters happen is well-established. For instance, according to the National Institute of Building Sciences, every dollar spent on pre-disaster mitigation saves \$4 in rebuilding costs in the aftermath of a storm.

A flood-ready infrastructure standard should apply to Harvey rebuilding and all future federally funded construction projects. Hurricane Harvey is the latest glaring example of how vulnerable our country's infrastructure is to flood risk, and its damage will only add to the already more than \$500 billion in losses caused by flood-related disasters since 2000.

Recent polling found that 82 percent of registered voters (Democrats: 92%, Independents: 78% Republicans: 74%) support a requirement that all federally funded infrastructure in flood-prone areas be constructed to better withstand the impacts of flooding.

A federal flood-ready infrastructure standard will help protect people and property, reduce federal expenses associated with rebuilding after tremendous flood losses, and make communities stronger. We ask the administration to lead the nation in rebuilding after Harvey by ensuring our infrastructure is strong enough to withstand the next big flood, and would welcome the opportunity to work with the Administration on such a standard.

Thank you,



Laura Lightbody, Director
The Pew Charitable Trust



Eli Lehrer, President
R Street Institute

CC: Elaine Duke, Acting Secretary, The Department of Homeland Security