

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

May 1, 2025

The Honorable Howard Lutnick
Secretary
U.S. Department of Commerce
1401 Constitution Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20230

Ben Page
Acting Assistant Secretary
Economic Development Administration
1800 F Street, NW
Washington, DC 20405

Secretary Lutnick and Acting Assistant Secretary Page,

We write today on behalf of our constituents in Western North Carolina who are continuing to recover and rebuild from the devastation of Hurricane Helene. In December 2024, Congress appropriated \$1.5 billion to the Economic Development Administration (EDA) to provide relief to the communities impacted by Hurricane Helene.

We understand both the Department of Commerce and the EDA are working diligently to issue a notice of funding opportunity (NOFO) outlining how these appropriated funds may be spent. We strongly encourage you to finalize the NOFO as quickly as possible to provide guidance and hope to North Carolinians looking to rebuild in the shadow of Helene. This funding is crucial to ensuring Western North Carolina has the tools necessary to rebuild even stronger than before.

Hurricane Helene is the deadliest tropical storm to ever hit North Carolina and the deadliest in the United States since Hurricane Katrina in 2005. As a result, businesses suffered dramatic losses in revenue as they remained unable to operate, and many have yet to fully reopen. Businesses in Western North Carolina, including over 500,000 small businesses, could see \$12.4 billion in economic losses. This would include direct damage to property, inaccessible roads, and extended outages of utility services.

Over 50,000 businesses in the fifteen hardest-hit counties are expected to suffer the most. Helene devastated Western North Carolina at the peak of its fall tourism season – one of the key revenue generators for the region. October is generally when many businesses make enough money to sustain them through the winter until tourists return in greater numbers during spring. These numbers are even more shocking when considering that, according to the Federal Emergency Management Agency and the Department of Labor, 40% of small businesses will never reopen after a natural disaster and another 25% will close within one year.

In light of these harrowing statistics, we urge you to issue the NOFO as soon as possible. We understand and appreciate the careful work necessary to ensure taxpayer dollars are effectively, efficiently, and responsibly used. We look forward to your release of the NOFO and these critical dollars as early as possible to ensure Western North Carolina can emerge stronger than before.

Sincerely,



Thom Tillis
United States Senator



Ted Budd
United States Senator



Chuck Edwards
Member of Congress



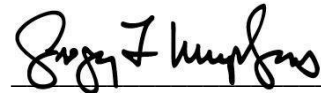
Donald G. Davis
Member of Congress



Tim Moore
Member of Congress



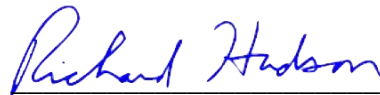
Addison McDowell
Member of Congress



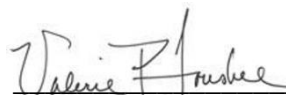
Gregory F. Murphy, M.D.
Member of Congress



Deborah K. Ross
Member of Congress



Richard Hudson
Member of Congress



Valerie P. Foushee
Member of Congress



Alma S. Adams, Ph.D.
Member of Congress