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# TEXAS HOUSE *of* REPRESENTATIVES

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## **John Turner**

State Representative, District 114

May 19, 2020

Administrator Peter T. Gaynor  
Federal Emergency Management Agency  
451 7th Street S.W.,  
Washington, DC 20410

Dear Administrator Gaynor,

I am writing in support of the State of Texas's appeal under 44 C.F.R. § 206.46(b) of the denial of a Major Disaster Declaration as a result of severe weather and tornadoes that impacted north Texas on October 20, 2019. As the State Representative whose district was most directly affected by this disaster, I would like to add my voice to those of other federal and state officials and respectfully request reconsideration of the denial.

The October 2019 storm resulted in multiple tornadoes, the strongest of which was an EF-3 tornado cutting through north Dallas and Richardson with 140 mph winds. It is estimated that over 1,200 structures were damaged or destroyed along a 15-mile stretch of densely populated area. Soon after the disaster, the Insurance Council of Texas (ICT) estimated that the region suffered \$2 billion in insured damages. The ICT noted that this was likely the costliest tornado event in Texas history and the costliest severe weather event of any kind for north Texas.

The Joint Preliminary Damage Assessments began soon thereafter. Validating the uninsured damage to public property and facilities caused by the storm has been a lengthy process. However, the summary previously considered by FEMA did not include \$27,080,228 from the Dallas Independent School District (DISD) in uninsured damage sustained at three campuses - Thomas Jefferson High School, Cary Middle School, and Walnut Hill Elementary.

The destruction on these campuses displaced 3,700 students from their schools - a disruption later compounded by the school closures forced by COVID-19. Nonetheless, DISD faculty and staff from these campuses have persevered and have continued to serve students and families admirably throughout the current crisis. Many more in our community have struggled to continue recovering from the tornado even as the coronavirus pandemic has presented new challenges.

I understand that following the initial request for a Major Disaster Declaration, FEMA certified \$18,611,222 in uninsured damages to public property and infrastructure. Adding over \$27

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million in uninsured losses incurred by DISD would place the October tornado well above FEMA's damage threshold for Texas of \$38,472,708 to declare a major disaster. In light of these and other factors cited in the appeal submitted by Governor Abbott, I respectfully urge you to recommend to the President approval of a Major Disaster Declaration for the affected regions.

Thank you for your consideration of this request and your careful review of this matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "John Turner", with a long, sweeping horizontal flourish extending to the right.

John Turner  
State Representative  
House District 114

(delivered via email through the FEMA Regional Administrator for Region 6)