

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

January 26, 2026

Ms. Karen Evans
Senior Official Performing the Duties of the
Administrator
Federal Emergency Management Agency
500 C Street, SW
Washington, DC 20024

The Honorable Kristi Noem
Secretary
Department of Homeland Security
2707 Martin Luther King Jr. Avenue, SE
Washington, DC 20528

Dear Ms. Evans and Secretary Noem,

We are writing you to end the inexplicable reimbursement delays for thousands of contracts under the Federal Emergency Management Agency's (FEMA) Emergency Food and Shelter Program (EFSP) for which disbursements have not been made as required by law. We request that you release these funds immediately. The Government Accountability Office has already determined that FEMA's continued refusal to disburse EFSP grants is unlawful and constitutes a violation of the Impoundment Control Act by improperly delaying or effectively preventing the obligation of budget authority that Congress expressly directed the agency to spend.¹

In January 2025, nearly \$117 million in federal EFSP funding was frozen without explanation and with no indication of when the funds might be released.² Although a federal judge ordered FEMA to disburse the funding on March 6, 2025, FEMA has still not released the funds.³ FEMA has provided no explanation for this refusal other than saying that it is conducting a "manual review," nor has it provided a timeline for when the funds might be released.⁴

EFSP is a vital federal program that supports local governments and nonprofit organizations across the country in their efforts to "provide shelter, food and supportive services to individuals and families experiencing, or at risk of experiencing, hunger and/or homelessness."⁵ Local organizations like United Way use EFSP funds to serve meals, provide groceries, offer communal lodging, and keep people in their homes by providing rental or mortgage assistance and preventing utility service cut-offs.⁶ These funds are overseen and distributed by the a National Board, which is chaired by FEMA and consists of individuals affiliated with large relief organizations

¹ *Department of Homeland Security—Application of the Impoundment Control Act to Federal Emergency Management Agency Prior Year Federal Assistance Appropriations*, GAO (Sept. 29, 2025) (online at [Department of Homeland Security—Application of the Impoundment Control Act to Federal Emergency Management Agency Prior Year Federal Assistance Appropriations | U.S. GAO](#))

² See United Way Bay Area, *Open Letter to Congress to Save EFSP* (Mar. 11, 2025) (online at <https://uwba.org/blog/open-letter-to-congress-to-save-efsp/>).

³ *Judge Finds FEMA Withholding Grants in Violation of Court Order*, The Hill (Apr. 4, 2025) (online at <https://thehill.com/regulation/court-battles/5232494-judge-fema-grants-trump-blue-states/>). See also *United Way of Central Oregon Distributes Nearly \$59,000 in Food and Shelter Grants to 10 Organizations*, KTVZ21 (July 15, 2025) (online at <https://ktvz.com/news/central-oregon/2025/07/15/united-way-of-central-oregon-distributes-nearly-59000-in-food-and-shelter-grants-to-10-organizations/>).

⁴ See *Judge Finds FEMA Withholding Grants in Violation of Court Order*, The Hill (Apr. 4, 2025) (online at <https://thehill.com/regulation/court-battles/5232494-judge-fema-grants-trump-blue-states/>).

⁵ Federal Emergency Management Agency, *Emergency Food and Shelter Program* (Mar. 20, 2025) (online at www.fema.gov/grants/emergency-food-and-shelter-program).

⁶ *Id.*

such as the American Red Cross, United Way Worldwide, Catholic Charities USA, the Salvation Army, the Jewish Federation of North America, and the National Council of Churches of Christ in the USA.⁷

During its 40 years of operation, EFSP has disbursed more than \$6.5 billion to more than 14,000 service providers in more than 2,500 counties and cities.⁸ In 2024 alone, more than 70 counties in Illinois were awarded over \$5 million in EFSP funding, yet none of these funds have been disbursed. Organizations that were approved months ago are still waiting for the dollars they were promised. Although EFSP receives comparatively little federal funding the program provides critical support to local organizations, filling gaps to respond to urgent needs. For every dollar FEMA continues to withhold from the EFSP, a local organization loses the ability to keep people fed, sheltered, and alive. When EFSP funding flows, shelters are able to keep their kitchens stocked, beds filled and ensure immediate access to food and shelter for families in crisis.

This breakdown in the EFSP process is occurring while broader questions are being raised about the future of FEMA itself. President Trump has repeatedly suggested a significant downsizing of FEMA and shifting federal responsibilities to the states.⁹ This has only heightened the anxiety of local providers already waiting for overdue EFSP dollars. At a moment when communities are relying on federal support to meet basic needs, uncertainty about the agency's long-term capacity and direction is especially troubling.

Across the country, in every community, our constituents and local organizations are negatively impacted by these irresponsible funding freezes. Your agency's requirement to fulfill these contracts is not optional; those requirements are a recognition that these funds are the difference between families staying housed or entering homeless, between stability or crisis. Congress has already appropriated these funds, and communities are entitled to them under federal law.

To ensure that EFSP can continue to provide life-saving support to individuals, children, families, and communities nationwide, EFSP must resume disbursement of funds immediately. In addition, we request answers to the following inquiries by February 26, 2026:

- 1) Under what statutory authority is FEMA withholding EFSP funds that Congress has already appropriated, obligated, and directed the agency to disburse? Please cite the exact legal provisions you believe permitted this continued delay.
- 2) GAO has concluded that FEMA's refusal to release EFSP grants is unlawful and constitutes a violation of the Impoundment Control Act. What specific actions are FEMA taking to come into immediate compliance with this finding, and on what date will all overdue EFSP funds be fully disbursed?
- 3) If FEMA's structure or responsibilities are modified, reduced, or dissolved, what binding assurances can you provide that EFSP recipients will receive timely notice and uninterrupted access to the

⁷ See United Way, *Emergency Food and Shelter National Board Program: Phase 30 Responsibilities and Requirements Manual* (online at https://efsp.unitedway.org/efsp/website/websiteContents/PDFs/EFSPManual/Phase_30_Manual.pdf) (accessed July 25, 2025). EFSP is distinct from EFSP-H, which is a separate program that provides funding to local government, nonprofit, and faith-based organizations that provide food, shelter, and supportive services to migrants encountered by the Department of Homeland Security (DHS). Congressional Research Service, *FEMA's Emergency Food and Shelter Program-Humanitarian Relief (EFSP-H) and the New Shelter and Services Program (SSP)* (Aug. 30, 2023) (online at <https://www.congress.gov/crs-product/IN12132>).

⁸ Congressional Research Service, *FEMA's Emergency Food and Shelter Program (EFSP)* (Apr. 4, 2024) (online at www.congress.gov/crs-product/IF12026).

⁹ After Texas Disaster, Trump Shifts His Tone on FEMA, NYT (July. 11, 2025), (online at <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/07/11/us/politics/trump-fema-texas-flood.html>)

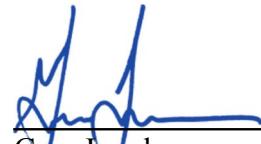
federal support they have been promised? How will the Administration ensure continued assistance for individuals and families experiencing homelessness or food insecurity during any such transition?

Thank you for your attention to this urgent matter. We look forward to your prompt response.

Sincerely,



Raja Krishnamoorthi
Member of Congress



Greg Landsman
Member of Congress



Eleanor Holmes Norton
Member of Congress



Jared Huffman
Member of Congress



Dave Min
Member of Congress



Diana DeGette
Member of Congress



Cleo Fields
Member of Congress



Henry C. "Hank" Johnson, Jr.
Member of Congress



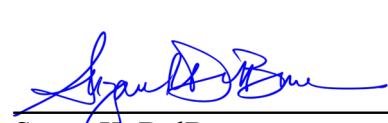
Rashida Tlaib
Member of Congress



Judy Chu
Member of Congress



Lucy McBath
Member of Congress



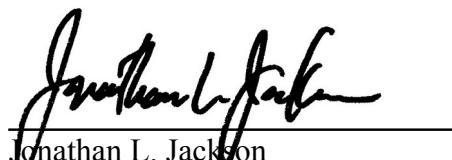
Suzan K. DelBene
Member of Congress



Jerry Nadler
Member of Congress



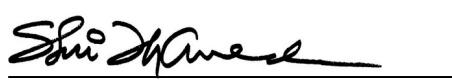
Troy A. Carter, Sr.
Member of Congress



Jonathan L. Jackson
Member of Congress



Ted W. Lieu
Member of Congress



Shri Thanedar
Member of Congress



Dan Goldman
Member of Congress



Angie Craig
Member of Congress



Greg Stanton
Member of Congress



Steve Cohen
Member of Congress



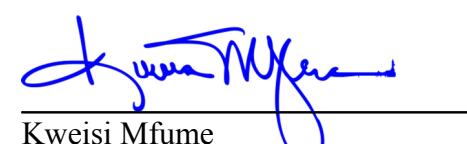
Shontel M. Brown
Member of Congress



Dina Titus
Member of Congress



Zoe Lofgren
Member of Congress



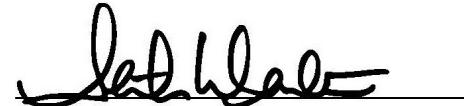
Kweisi Mfume
Member of Congress



Jim Tokuda
Member of Congress



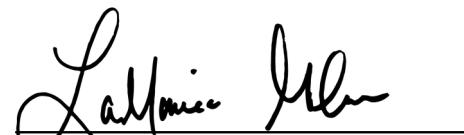
Jesús G. "Chuy" García
Member of Congress



Seth Moulton
Member of Congress



Mary Gay Scanlon
Member of Congress



LaMonica McIver
Member of Congress



Betty McCollum
Member of Congress



Joyce Beatty
Member of Congress



Bennie G. Thompson
Member of Congress



Lateefah Simon
Member of Congress



Kevin Mullin
Member of Congress



Nikki Budzinski
Member of Congress



Nydia M. Velázquez
Member of Congress



Laura Friedman
Member of Congress



John Garamendi
Member of Congress



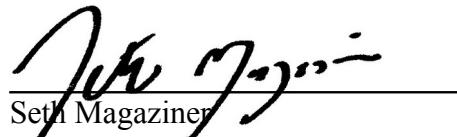
Timothy M. Kennedy
Member of Congress



Dwight Evans
Member of Congress



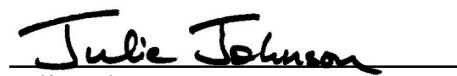
Emanuel Cleaver, II
Member of Congress



Seth Magaziner
Member of Congress



Yassamin Ansari
Member of Congress



Julie Johnson
Member of Congress



Jan Schakowsky
Member of Congress