

RICHLAND COUNTY COUNCIL

SOUTH CAROLINA

December 11, 2015

The Honorable Nikki R. Haley
Office of the Governor
1205 Pendleton Street
Columbia, SC 29201

Dear Governor Haley:

We would like to bring to your attention the most recent data that has been compiled relating to the significant impact the flooding disaster has had in Richland County. As you consider legislative initiatives at the Federal and State levels to address this tragic occurrence in our state, we would like to provide the most current information for our County.

- Richland County was by far one of the most impacted counties in the state, with over **20% of all requests for FEMA Individual Assistance** coming from Richland County (over 19,400 residents, many with very low to moderate incomes). Currently, only 1 in 4 of these Richland residents has received Federal financial assistance, and many still continue to have significant unmet needs as a result of the disaster.
- Damage to housing in special flood hazard areas alone amounts to **\$37 million in damage¹**. These homes represent only 1% of Richland County's total housing. However, many more homes outside the floodplain were severely damaged due to the severity of the storm. At least **179 homes were substantially damaged**, and thousands more experienced significant damage. Many residents are unable to return to their homes due to the substantial cost of repair. Total residential flood-related losses in the County (damages to homes, personal property, costs of alternative housing, etc.) will likely be in excess of **\$100 million**.
- 20 dams failed in Richland County, including **1/2 of the DHEC regulated dam failures statewide**, substantially damaging homes downstream of these failed dams. In addition, over **250 Richland County roads** were damaged. Many of the neighborhoods affected by this damage have experienced economic hardship and require further assistance.
- Over **300 wells** throughout Richland County have tested positive for Coliform/*E. coli*, mainly due to floodwaters breaching the tops of these wells. Lower Richland, in particular, with its very vulnerable low-income population, was most impacted.
- Businesses in Richland County were also significantly impacted by the flood. Lack of potable water from the city water plant and flood-related damage limited businesses' ability to service customers countywide. Many businesses were closed for an extended period immediately following the disaster. The flooding also resulted in agricultural losses on farmlands in the County.
- Richland County itself experienced an estimated \$15 million of direct damage, but this does not take into account likely losses in revenue due to reduced



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¹ Excluding City of Columbia housing in special flood hazard areas.

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property and sales taxes resulting from the flood. In total, the losses from the flood to Richland County residents, businesses, industry, and government could exceed \$1 billion.

Based on current assessments of damage and projected costs, Richland County has a need for additional direct Federal financial assistance as an entitlement community to move forward with our long-term recovery needs. These expected needs may include, but are not limited to the following:

- **Acquisition/Demolition of Substantially Damaged Homes:** A number of residents are unable to rebuild due to excessive cost to repair their properties. We have identified dozens of property owners who interested in a buyout program and many more would likely also participate if funding is approved.
- **Housing Development and Repairs:** Richland County has a need for affordable housing that was only exacerbated by the recent flooding event. Funding to support the most vulnerable populations in Richland County is needed to assist residents most impacted by the recent flooding.
- **Infrastructure Improvements to Mitigate Future Losses:** The County must maintain mobility throughout the County for all its residents in the face of disaster. The County must improve its transportation infrastructure and watershed management system to prevent losses like the ones experienced in the recent flood event.
- **Economic Development in Flood-Impacted Areas of the County:** Building a strong economic base in areas of the County most impacted by the flood would make for a more resilient community with the ability to withstand future disasters.
- **Identifying Other Unmet Needs:** As we are now two months post-flood, the County is in the process of developing a Long-Term Recovery Plan to further identify the unmet needs of the County and develop a targeted Action Plan for the County to implement with the support of Federal financial assistance.

We trust that this information combined with similar statistics for the other counties in South Carolina will allow you to accurately evaluate the need for Federal assistance to address each of these areas of severe impact. Your careful consideration of this important matter is appreciated.

Progressively yours,



Torrey Rush
Chairman
Richland County Council



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