



Mary Lightbody  
Ohio House of Representatives  
District 04  
77 South High Street, 10<sup>th</sup> floor  
Columbus, Ohio 43215



Kent Smith  
Ohio Senate  
District 21  
1 Capitol Square  
Columbus, Ohio 43215

September 22, 2023

President Joseph R. Biden  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW  
Washington, DC 20500

Administrator Deanne Criswell  
Federal Emergency Management Agency  
500 C Street SW  
Washington, DC 20024

**RE: Request to Declare a Major Disaster in East Palestine, Ohio**

Dear President Biden and Administrator Criswell:

We write to ask that you approve Ohio Governor Mike DeWine's July 3, 2023, Request for Presidential Declaration of Major Disaster or Emergency per the Stafford Act (42 USC 5170). This declaration would provide additional resources from the federal government that are needed to address the ongoing needs in East Palestine, Ohio, and the surrounding area.

Individuals who have signed below are members of the National Caucus of Environmental Legislators (NCEL), a nonpartisan network of state legislators who are working to protect, conserve, and improve the natural and human environment. NCEL recently convened in Indianapolis for our National Forum to share information about environmental issues and legislation.

In one of the sessions, we heard from Jami Wallace, the Founder, and President of the Unity Council for the East Palestine Train Derailment, about ongoing issues that families, and especially children, are experiencing. She shared neighbors and her personal story about the ongoing challenges faced by residents of East Palestine since February 3. These difficulties include continued displacement from their homes, exposure to toxic chemicals in the air and groundwater, and an onset of new health concerns. The long-term effects on residents of the hazardous chemical release are still not known.

This community feels overlooked and left behind as they continue to deal with these impacts and the consequences of misguided early decisions in the cleanup effort. We are concerned that so many highly toxic and carcinogenic chemicals were released into the soil, water, and air, and recognize the need for concerted efforts to remove all immediate and persistent risks to people and the environment.

Since the derailment, Senator Sherrod Brown and other members of the Ohio congressional delegation have made it a top priority to support the people of East Palestine, advance the cleanup effort, and address the railway companies' profit-focused lax safety. Members of the Ohio House and the Ohio Senate have worked on ensuring railroad safety and to prevent disasters like this from happening again. Pennsylvania Governor Josh Shapiro has ensured the provision of water testing from the

Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection, supported the fire crews who had their equipment damaged in the immediate aftermath, and worked to hold the railway accountable.

We appreciate that your administration has mobilized a multi-agency effort and that FEMA has been involved in remediation since the derailment. East Palestine needs additional FEMA assistance including programs and resources such as the Individuals and Households Program, the Crisis Counseling Program, the Disaster Unemployment Assistance Program, Disaster Legal Services, and Small Business Administration Disaster Assistance.

The people of East Palestine deserve clear answers and accurate information throughout the cleanup efforts. A state of emergency would help comprehensively address this disaster with additional technology and the help of experts with experience and expertise in cleaning up chemical spills of this size and nature. The residents of East Palestine and others across the watershed and region deserve that support.

On July 3, 2023, Governor DeWine sent a letter requesting a Major Disaster Declaration per the Stafford Act (42 USC 5170) to aid in East Palestine's recovery. We appreciate that the Governor made this request; however, the Governor has yet to receive a formal response from FEMA. Senator Sherrod Brown also sent a letter on August 7, 2023, in support of this declaration and to request additional information about the federal government's response. We write to support their requests in hopes that residents of East Palestine will not have to wait any longer for additional assistance from FEMA. It is abundantly clear that more resources are urgently needed to fully address the cost of the disaster on the people of this small community and the surrounding area. We must continue to support the people of East Palestine.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Ohio Representative Mary Lightbody, Ph.D.  
(OH-4)

Ohio Senator Kent Smith  
(OH-21)

Alabama Representative John Rogers  
(AL-52)

Colorado Representative Cathy Kipp  
(CO-52)

Alaska Representative Andy Josephson  
(AK-13)

Colorado Representative Stephanie Vigil  
(CO-16)

Alaska Senator Elvi Gray-Jackson  
(AK-7)

Colorado Senator Sonya Jaquez Lewis  
(CO-17)

Arizona Senator Juan Mendez  
(AZ-8)

Colorado Senator Dafna Michaelson Jenet  
(CO-21)

Connecticut Representative David Michel  
(CT-146)

Connecticut Representative Geraldo Reyes  
(CT-75)

Connecticut Representative Kevin Ryan  
(CT-139)

Georgia Representative Kim Schofield  
(GA-63)

Georgia Senator Tonya Anderson  
(GA-43)

Hawaii Representative Amy Perruso  
(HI-46)

Illinois Senator Laura Fine  
(IL-9)

Illinois Senator Rachel Ventura  
(IL-43)

Maine Representative Arthur Bell  
(ME-103)

Maine Representative Sophia Warren  
(ME-124)

Maryland Delegate Lorig Charkoudian  
(MD-20)

Maryland Delegate Jheanelle Wilkins  
(MD-20)

Michigan Representative Laurie Pohutsky  
(MI-17)

Minnesota Representative Sydney Jordan  
(MN-60)

Minnesota Representative Lucille Rehm  
(MN-48)

New Hampshire Representative Susan Almy  
(NH-58)

New Hampshire Representative Maria Perez  
(NH-102)

New Mexico Representative Joanne Ferrary  
(NM- 37)

North Carolina Representative Pricey  
Harrison  
(NC-61)

North Carolina Representative Julia Von  
Haefen  
(NC-36)

Oregon Senator Janeen Sollman  
(OR-15)

Rhode Island Representative Jennifer Boylan  
(RI-66)

Rhode Island Representative Lauren Carson  
(RI-75)

Rhode Island Representative Rebecca Kislak  
(RI-4)

Rhode Island Representative Michelle  
McGaw  
(RI-71)

Rhode Island Representative Teresa Tanzi  
(RI-34)

Utah Representative Joel Briscoe  
(UT-24)

Vermont Representative Esme Cole  
(VT-105)

Virginia Delegate Kaye Kory  
(VA-38)