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August 6, 2012

The Honorable Adam Schiff
United States Congress
2411 Rayburn HOB
Washington D.C. 20515

RE: Support for the Disaster Declaration Improvement Act (H.R. 5870)

Dear Congressman Schiff:

On behalf of the League of California Cities, I am pleased to inform you of our support for H.R. 5870, the Disaster Declaration Improvement Act. This measure gives necessary consideration to our most populous states when federal assistance is sought to restore critical infrastructure and essential services following a disaster.

All disasters are local events, and a central purpose of city government is to protect the safety and well-being of its residents. Unfortunately, the current methodology applied by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) in their review of federal assistance requests places states with large populations, such as California, at a disadvantage. The windstorms that struck southern California communities in the winter of 2011 is a prime example of why change is needed. Despite the extensive and costly damage, our state did not qualify for federal relief while the same windstorm event in our neighboring states would have easily qualified. This is primarily because one of the criteria used in FEMA's request review process establishes a minimum dollar threshold for damages based on statewide population. The Disaster Declaration Improvement Act offers alternative criteria for the minimum damage threshold levels in our most populous states, thereby providing more consistent consideration between all states in the event they suffer a natural or man-made disaster.

For the aforementioned reasons we are pleased to support this important measure and thank you for your leadership in this area. If you have any questions or need any additional information, please contact me or our Washington representatives, Eve M. O'Toole and Dustin McDonald at (202) 419-2505 and (202) 419-2511 respectively.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Chris McKenzie".

Christopher McKenzie
Executive Director