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February 22, 2021

The Honorable Gary Peters, Chairman
Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Rob Portman, Ranking Member
Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Peters and Ranking Member Portman:

On behalf of the state emergency management directors of all 50 states, territories, and the District of Columbia, the National Emergency Management Association (NEMA) requests you expeditiously consider and approve the nomination of Deanne Criswell for Administrator of the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA).

With Criswell as Administrator, we believe FEMA will be able to move forward in effectively tackling its diverse mission set, which covers a vast array of needs, including: supporting the ongoing COVID-19 response, strengthening resilience in the face of a changing climate and evolving hazards, assisting with response and recovery following disasters, and enhancing community and individual preparedness nationwide. Her past experiences at FEMA clearly demonstrate her commitment to a risk-based, equitable approach to emergency management and we believe she will serve as a partner and ally to state and local officials.

FEMA at its best leverages its authorities and position as the federal lead for disaster response and recovery to mitigate suffering in the wake of a disaster, but it does not do so in a vacuum. State and local jurisdictions are the heartbeat of any response, and Criswell's experiences at both the federal and local levels will ensure that she prioritizes coordination within and across the federal interagency in support of state and local needs.

There are many challenges facing FEMA such as reducing the complexity of disaster assistance programs, embracing data science for better outcomes, improving unified coordination across the federal interagency, and building a more robust capability for national resource management and supply chain coordination. Equally important is the imperative that FEMA strive for a more diverse workforce and create a new workplace culture that stands for equity, inclusion and respect rather than harassment and discrimination. The increasing complexity of the myriad events that emergency management must be able to address at all levels of government require a strong and seamless local/state/federal partnership. Criswell's background and experience make her uniquely positioned to lead FEMA into the future.

Your leadership in ensuring a swift and successful confirmation of Deanne Criswell will allow the agency to continue addressing its statutory missions so vital during our nation's most challenging moments. We stand ready to assist her once she is confirmed and you throughout the process.

Sincerely,

Sima Merick
NEMA President
Director, Ohio Emergency Management Agency

President: Ms. Sima Merick, OH | **Vice President:** Ms. Erica Bornemann, VT | **Secretary:** Mr. Bill Hackett, CT
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