

**Congress of the United States**  
**Washington, DC 20515**

March 31, 2023

Dear Chair Rogers and Ranking Member Cartwright:

As you begin work on the Fiscal Year 2024 Commerce, Justice, Science, and Related Agencies appropriations bill, we respectfully request that you provide robust funding levels on wildfire science to match the scale of the wildfire crisis. A whole of government approach to wildfires requires that we build a more responsive and resilient wildland firefighting workforce and better leverage the resources and expertise at our federal science agencies to improve wildfire response capabilities and to utilize data and technology to protect communities.

As states continue to contend with the reality of increasingly large wildfires and nearly year-long fire seasons, these are issues that we have been working to address for years. In 2022, over 66,000 wildfires burned over 7.5 million acres across the country. The Calf Canyon/Hermits Peak Fire in New Mexico was the largest and most destructive in the state's history. Texas experienced its most destructive wildfire year in over a decade. In the Pacific Northwest, cities including Seattle and Portland experienced some of the worst air quality of any city in the world due to wildfire smoke. Although California's 2022 fire season was thankfully less severe than the historic disasters in 2021 and 2020, multiple fires, including the Mosquito Fire and McKinney Fire, threatened communities and forced evacuations.

We applaud the Administration's 10-year strategy to combat wildfires, and appreciate the important investments in wildfire science made in the Fiscal 2023 Omnibus. We strongly encourage sustained and continued investment in the science, observation, and technology required to plan and respond to wildfires before and after ignition.

Specifically, we are requesting:

*\$19 million for Fire Weather Research at NOAA.* – Due to the increasing number and severity of wildfires, especially in the Western United States, NOAA plays an important role in providing advanced notice of wildfire risks and active wildfire-weather coupled forecasts. We request a total of \$19,000,000 to fully support fire weather initiatives across NOAA, including to support the Fire Weather Testbed. We encourage NOAA to utilize its satellite and artificial intelligence assets in these efforts and to continue working with interested Federal, State, Tribal, and local partners and land managers to improve information dissemination related to wildfire events.

*Support the President's Budget Request for Incident Meteorologist Workforce at NWS.* – We are pleased that the FY23 Omnibus expanded the Incident Meteorologist (IMET) workforce to help in the prediction and response to wildfires, including for retainment, recruitment, and training. We request funding sufficient to maintain the 15 new IMETs for wildfires and other extreme events.

*\$8 million for Advanced Capabilities for Emergency Response Operations (ACERO) at NASA.* – There are significant limitations on the safe use of unmanned and manned aerial assets for situational awareness and firefighting during wildfire incidents. We applaud the \$10 million included in the FY23 Omnibus to initiate the ACERO initiative to leverage NASA-developed

traffic management capabilities to improve responses to wildfires and other disasters. We request funding of \$8,000,000 for ACERO to continue to improve aerial responses to wildfires.

*Increased funding for Wildfire Detection Technologies at NASA* – We request increased funding for NASA to continue and expand concept studies, in collaboration with commercial space-based remote sensing providers, to develop and demonstrate low-cost and scalable infrared sensing technologies and related platforms that passively monitor areas of the United States susceptible to wildland fires and provide early warning to first responders. We appreciate that the FY23 Omnibus included \$8 million for Wildfire Detection Technologies concept studies, and we support continued funding for this ongoing work, including transitioning to demonstration. We ask that this funding be provided, as necessary, in addition to NASA’s requested funding.

*\$7.56 million for Wildfires and the Wildland-Urban Interface at NIST* – We request \$7,560,000 Wildfire- and the Wildland-Urban Interface-related research at NIST within funding for Climate and Energy Measurement, Tools, and Testbeds. Developing improved WUI risk exposure metrics and tools to assess and mitigate the fire vulnerability of structures and communities is important to protecting at-risk communities.

As climate change all but ensures an ever-expanding fire season in the years to come, we must continue to deploy our federal resources in line with needs on the ground. It is time for the federal government to start treating wildfires more like other major disasters such as hurricanes, tornadoes, and floods by supporting more than just traditional disaster relief efforts. We ask that you provide this funding for wildfire programs and ensure that wildfire priorities outlined by the White House be reflected in the final appropriations bills.

We appreciate your attention to our request. We look forward to working with you as the bills come to the floor, and on making vital investments to the public health, public safety, and resiliency of our communities.

Sincerely,



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Zoe Lofgren  
Member of Congress



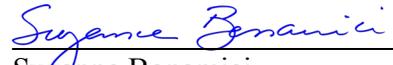
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Joe Neguse  
Member of Congress



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Member of Congress  
Chairman, Subcommittee on  
Forestry



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Suzanne Bonamici  
Member of Congress



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Kim Schrier, M.D.  
Member of Congress



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Ami Bera, M.D.  
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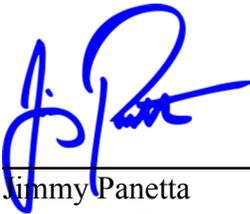
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Jared Huffman  
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Grace F. Napolitano  
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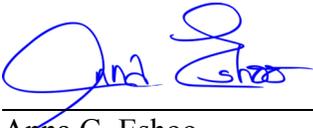
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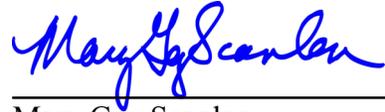
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