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Dear Senators,

I write this letter today to express my gratitude to the U.S. Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Homeland Security for holding this hearing into the response of the Federal Emergency Management Agency and, by default, FEMA employees to COVID-19.

As many of you know, FEMA's scope and breadth of responsibility to our country and its citizens is broad and encompassing. From fires to floods, tornadoes to hurricanes, pandemics to border support, FEMA employees and union members stand ready to meet the challenges that are presented to our country within our scope and capabilities. Truly some of the best Americans and human beings I know have chosen this path of service to our great nation.

The specific topic at hand is our response to COVID-19, but I would be remiss in my duties as well as to my members if I did not remind everyone of our entire scope of responsibilities. During our response to this pandemic, we have also had to respond to hurricanes, fires, floods, and the U.S Capitol riots. While we were chosen to lead the support to COVID-19, our traditional role in supporting pandemics was much smaller in scope and aid, usually in hand with the CDC and HHS. This mission has been comprehensive to our members – at times exhausting – and required frequent personal safety questions for our employees and their families as it relates to COVID-19.

FEMA has roughly 5,000 full-time Title 5 U.S.C. employees to support a nation of 330 million (again roughly). The rest and vast majority of FEMA employees are temporary and term Stafford Act employees under Title 23 U.S.C. That means they do not have overarching Title 5 rights that full-time employees possess. I would ask that the Senate consider asking OPM for a comprehensive manpower management survey to be conducted within FEMA to ensure we have enough employees to support such a large and continued disaster for a nation of 330 million Americans.

Thank you,

Sincerely,

X *Steven J Reaves*

Steve J Reaves

President AFGE Local 4060