

MONTEREY COUNTY



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March 15, 2023

The Honorable Gavin Newsom
Governor, State of California
1020 O Street, Suite 9000
Sacramento, CA 95814

The Honorable Toni Atkins
Pro Tem, California State Senate
1020 O Street, Suite 8518
Sacramento, CA 95814

The Honorable Anthony Rendon
Speaker, California State Assembly
1020 O Street, Suite 8330
Sacramento, CA 95814

Re: Atmospheric River Flooding Disaster Relief for Undocumented Community Members

Dear Governor Newsom, Pro Tem Atkins, and Speaker Rendon:

The County of Monterey is writing you to respectfully request emergency resources for our undocumented community members who have been severely impacted and displaced due to flooding resulting from the current Atmospheric River the State is experiencing.

Many areas of the County, most significantly the small, severely disadvantaged community of Pajaro, have been devastated by flood impacts and is home to a significant population of our undocumented families. A breach of the Pajaro River levee resulted in the evacuation of 2,000 residents and impacted 800 homes, and the flood event is still underway. Other communities within the County that have similar populations of disadvantaged farm workers that have been similarly impacted.

Monterey County is home to a large group of undocumented community members and has the highest percentage of noncitizens of any California County at 21.7% (2018 Public Policy Institute of California report). The County's immigrant population, including undocumented immigrants, is a critical component of the community and labor force, especially for the County's two largest industries – agriculture and hospitality. The contributions of immigrants to the economic, cultural, and social well-being of our community are a source of pride for the County.

While the federal government is assisting our State and residents with aid to address the storm disasters we have experienced this year, it falls short of helping one of the most vulnerable populations in the Nation, State, and in our county; undocumented residents. Undocumented residents do not have access to many of the most needed FEMA disaster relief funds and assistance, such as FEMA Individuals and Households cash award, rental assistance, and Disaster Unemployment Assistance, unless they have U.S. citizen children or qualified non-citizen children.

Additionally, many of our undocumented community members will be out of work for a long period of time, as the flooding has damaged over 20,000 acres of local agriculture and farm lands, causing a significant loss of jobs. Our undocumented agriculture workers are also not eligible for unemployment insurance benefits, leaving those individuals and families struggling without resources and access to their basic needs.

For these reasons, the County respectfully requests emergency resources for our undocumented community members. Thank you for your consideration of this request. Should you have any questions, please feel free to contact the County of Monterey's Public Policy Advisor, Ashley Walker of Nossaman LLP at 916-442-8888.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Luis A. Alejo". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "L" and "A".

Luis A. Alejo, Chair
Board of Supervisors

Cc: Hon. Anna Caballero, 14th Senate District
Hon. John Laird, 17th Senate District
Hon. Robert Rivas, 29th Assembly District
Hon. Dawn Addis, 30th Assembly District