March 3, 2021

The Honorable Chokwe Antar Lumumba
Mayor of Jackson
Jackson City Hall
219 S. President St.
Jackson, MS 39201

Dear Mayor Lumumba:

I am writing you regarding the extreme weather that hit the State of Mississippi last month. I am deeply troubled about the number of Jackson residents that have been impacted and determined to help the city recover and rebuild after this major weather event.

As elected officials, we need to ensure that all available resources are accessed to help impacted Jackson residents. On the federal level, the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act authorizes President Biden to issue "major disaster" or "emergency" declarations before or after a disaster occurs but needs to be requested by the state or territory. Emergency declarations prompt aid to protect property, public health, and safety and lessens or averts the threat of an incident becoming a catastrophic event. Given their purpose, emergency declarations may precede an event. In contrast, a major disaster declaration, generally issued after disasters occur, grants federal agencies broader authority to provide supplemental assistance to help state and local governments, families and individuals, and certain nonprofit organizations recover from the incident. I understand that the State of Mississippi is still conducting damage assessments regarding the extreme weather event. It is critical that the City of Jackson work with MEMA and Hinds County to quickly submit the preliminary damage assessments and ensure federal aid is not delayed.

Once a presidential disaster declaration is issued, assistance from the Federal Emergency Management Agency, in partnership with other federal agencies, can come in a few forms. It can be aid to families and individuals for uninsured needs, assistance to state and local governments, and aid to certain nonprofits for rebuilding or replacing damaged infrastructure. Other avenues for federal assistance that may be available in this instance include the Clean Water State Revolving Fund (SRF), which provides financial assistance for infrastructure projects to publicly owned treatment works and other eligible recipients.

Additionally, there is the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Program which provides annual grants on a formula basis to provide suitable living environment in cities by expanding economic opportunities, principally for low- and moderate-income persons.
As the congressional representative for the City of Jackson and Chairman of the House Committee on Homeland Security, I stand ready to support any request for federal assistance. Please do not hesitate to contact me should you need further assistance in this effort.

Sincerely,

BENNIE G. THOMPSON
Member of Congress

CC:
Jackson City Council
Hinds County Board of Supervisors
Hinds County Representatives
Hinds County Senators