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July 31, 2026

The Honorable Donald J. Trump
President of the United States
The White House
Washington, D.C. 20500

Through: Jarrett W. Devine
Acting Regional Administrator
Federal Emergency Management Agency, Region 1
220 Binney Street
Cambridge, MA 02142

Dear Mr. President:

Under the provisions of Section 401 of the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act, 42 U.S.C. §§5121-5207 (Stafford Act), as implemented by 44 CFR § 206.36 and 44 CFR § 206.46(a), I respectfully submit this letter as a formal appeal of the July 2, 2026 denial of the Commonwealth's request for a Major Disaster Declaration for the severe winter storm and snowstorm that impacted the entire state, with the most severe impacts occurring in the southeastern counties, on February 22-23, 2026.

This February, Massachusetts experienced one of the worst winter storms we've seen in decades. Our first responders, public works crews and local communities worked around the clock to keep people safe and begin recovery. Immediately following the storms, we worked with our FEMA partners, who validated Massachusetts's disaster assistance eligible impacts to be approximately \$45 million, 3.5 times the state's Public Assistance indicator of \$13.6 million.

Massachusetts clearly exceeded all requirements and qualifications for federal assistance, and more importantly, Massachusetts communities need federal assistance to recover and move forward. I respectfully offer the following appeal for reconsideration of my request for Public Assistance (PA) due to the extreme hardship faced by Massachusetts communities from the February 22-23 severe winter storm.

Why the storm was so impactful

In Massachusetts, we pride ourselves on our ability to respond to – and recover from – blizzards and winter storms. Our communities have the experience, equipment, and capabilities to deal with snow and ice in the normal course. Our communities and critical state agencies maintain annual snow and ice reserve budgets. This storm was a once-in-a-generation event, in line with the New England Blizzard of 1978 and “Snowmageddon” in 2015, that completely eclipsed the Commonwealth’s regular winter capacity, resources, and reserves.

As I stated in the original declaration request (attached), the February 22-23 storm arrived on the heels of an unusually cold winter that left excessive snow and ice piles in locations where the state and localities would normally deposit new snow. Moreover, communities lacked sufficient time to pre-stage equipment because the February blizzard developed so rapidly. When the storm hit, it brought continuous snowfall of 2-4 inches an hour and wind gusts of over 70 mph. The whiteout conditions and quickly falling wet and heavy snow made it impossible for municipal plows to safely keep pace with the snow accumulation. Communities in southeastern Massachusetts faced the additional demand of responding to nearly 300,000 homes without power.

The overwhelming impact of the February 22-23 storm was not limited to Massachusetts. Rhode Island, New York, New Jersey, and Delaware all declared states of emergencies and subsequently submitted Federal Disaster Declaration Requests with FEMA-validated costs well above their state indicators. AccuWeather estimated that the storm cost the region \$34 billion to \$38 billion in total damage and economic loss¹.

Exhausting state and local resources

As the Governor of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, I have a deep respect for the principle that the federal government is the last line of defense for response and recovery and that federal support should only be requested when available state and local resources and partners are exhausted. In this appeal, I am confirming that Massachusetts and its communities have fully utilized all available resources. Receiving the FEMA-validated \$45 million in eligible recovery costs would not make us whole, but it would provide much-needed relief to the overwhelming impact of the February 22-23 storm.

The annual snow and ice removal budget for Massachusetts is calculated from the most recent 5-year average, and most Massachusetts cities and towns use the same metric. The Commonwealth’s snow and ice budget for the 2025-2026 winter season was \$85 million. Massachusetts Department of Transportation (DOT) receives \$65 million of the \$85 million to maintain state roadway networks and to support municipalities. That \$65 million was well short of \$180 million DOT spent on snow and ice removal for the whole season. For the February 22-23 blizzard alone, DOT spent \$26 million, but we have requested only \$8.5 million of that as a

¹ Blizzard Caused Up to \$38 Billion in Estimated Damage, Economic Loss: AccuWeather

reimbursable expense in the submitted declaration request. Cities and towns across the state are facing the same crippling overrun. Many communities are in-line with the DOT, seeing their costs triple their budget. Massachusetts acted quickly and passed a supplemental budget that included emergency relief for overburdened communities, but the \$100 million total made available for *all* Massachusetts communities and for the *entire* 2025-2026 winter season falls woefully short. It does not begin to reduce the \$45 million identified in the FEMA Preliminary Damage Assessment.

In short, Massachusetts acted responsibly. We budgeted for these impacts, activated our national guard, leveraged our emergency contracts, and received EMAC support from fellow states. Nevertheless, we still need the federal supplemental support made available to states via a Major Disaster Declaration.

Snow is an Eligible Event

Congress recently “reaffirmed” its intent regarding snowstorm declarations. The Homeland Security and Further Additional Continuing Appropriations Act, 2026 (Public Law 119-86), signed into law on April 30, 2026, includes Congressional direction stating that, pursuant to 42 U.S.C. § 5122(2), snowstorms shall be eligible for Federal relief under Major Disaster Declarations and that a Major Disaster Declaration should not be withheld simply because the disaster is classified as a snowstorm. This clear expression of Congressional intent reinforces that snowstorms are fully eligible for relief under the Stafford Act when the statutory declaration criteria are met.

States recovering from an overwhelming snowstorm are already facing a much higher threshold for federal support than other natural hazards. To apply for a Major Disaster Declaration for snow assistance, a state must not only demonstrate that it exceeds the per capita indicators both statewide and in the impacted counties, it must also:

- demonstrate that each county included in the request have a record, or near record, snowfall according to official federal government snowfall data; and
- include only those eligible costs accrued during a continuous 48-hour period.

This elevated standard for snowstorms represents a much higher threshold than any other natural disaster. The requirement for a record snowfall creates an escalation requirement not seen in any other FEMA declaration policy. In effect, a state must experience a historic event to qualify for federal assistance. Massachusetts surpassed this elevated standard in February 2026.

Massachusetts worked closely with the FEMA damage assessment team to validate all available costs to these unique standards and still identified costs 3.5 times our state indicator.

Request for Reconsideration

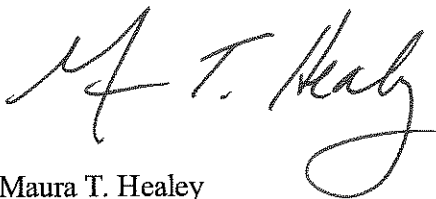
I urge you to consider the unprecedented conditions leading into this event and the rapid surge of personnel and heavy equipment required to protect Massachusetts residents' health and life safety. Given the unique and historic nature of this event and its impact on the Commonwealth, the requested assistance is both reasonable and necessary for our communities' successful recovery.

The greatest remaining unmet recovery need associated with this severe winter storms is financial assistance to help avoid economic shock to communities that have been forced to expend many times their annual budgets in one disastrous week. Without federal assistance, the ability of the communities within the Commonwealth to recover in a timely manner and avoid long-term economic damage is severely hindered.

I respectfully ask you to reconsider your decision and provide this crucial support to the Commonwealth. I thank you for the support that FEMA has provided to the Commonwealth to date and for your consideration of this appeal request.

If you have any questions about this request, please contact MEMA Director Dawn Brantley at 508-820-2010 or Dawn.Brantley@mass.gov.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "M. T. Healey".

Maura T. Healey
Governor

Enclosures:

- Enclosure 1 – Request for Presidential Disaster Declaration for February Blizzard
- Enclosure 2 – FEMA MA PDA Summary Snowstorm 22 Feb 2026 Final Validation
- Enclosure 3 – MA PDA February Snowstorm – Final Validation Email from FEMA R1
- Enclosure 4 – MA Major Disaster Declaration Request Denial Letter
- Enclosure 5 – Congressional snow service eligibility reaffirmation language