



March 23, 2017

<p>The Honorable Patty Murray United States Senate 154 Russell Senate Office Building Washington, D.C. 20515</p>	<p>The Honorable Ron Wyden United States Senate 221 Dirksen Senate Office Building Washington, D.C. 20510</p>
<p>The Honorable Maria Cantwell United States Senate 511 Hart Senate Office Building Washington, D.C. 20515</p>	<p>The Honorable Jeff Merkley United States Senate 313 Hart Senate Office Building Washington, D.C. 20510</p>
<p>The Honorable Earl Blumenauer United States House of Representatives 1111 Longworth House Office Building Washington, D.C. 20515</p>	<p>The Honorable Kurt Schrader United States House of Representatives 108 Cannon House Office Building Washington, D.C. 20515</p>
<p>The Honorable Suzanne Bonamici United States House of Representatives 439 Cannon House Office Building Washington, D.C. 20515</p>	<p>The Honorable Jaime Herrera Buetler United States House of Representatives 1107 Longworth House Office Building Washington, D.C. 20515</p>

Dear Senators and Members of Congress:

As the governing body of the Regional Disaster Preparedness Organization of the Portland, Oregon metropolitan region, we write to register our deep concern with the President’s proposed 2018 budget, which calls for a \$667 million cut to grant programs administered by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). While the budget document, “America First: A Budget Blueprint to Make America Great Again,” lacks specificity on how cuts will be applied to FEMA grant programs, we stand opposed to any cuts to the Pre-Disaster Mitigation Program (PDM), the Urban Areas Security Initiative (UASI), and the other grant programs under the Homeland Security Grant Program (HSGP). With 13 metropolitan areas having experienced terrorist attacks in the last year, and international and domestic terrorism groups still threatening our metropolitan areas, the HSGP plays a vital role in ensuring that state and local governments are prepared to mitigate, respond to and recover from terrorist attacks and have the necessary resources to protect their communities and their residents. The HSGP and the PDM also bolster, rather than supplant, local efforts to collaborate at the metropolitan area, state and federal levels to prepare for all-hazards events, including major earthquakes, which often impact multiple jurisdictions at the same time.

The Regional Disaster Preparedness Organization (RDPO) is a bi-state partnership of local and regional government agencies, non-governmental organizations, and private-sector stakeholders representing the Portland Metropolitan Region (PMR) collaborating to increase the region’s resiliency to disasters. The RDPO serves as

the Urban Area Work Group for the execution of the UASI grant program. This program has been a vital resource in helping the PMR develop and maintain counter-terrorism and other regional all-hazards capabilities.

The RDPO's capabilities (built and maintained with UASI dollars) align with the National Preparedness Goal, cut across prevention, protection, mitigation, response and recovery mission areas, and include a range of regional plans, specialized equipment and technology, coordination systems, and well-trained technical teams, including intelligence gathering and analysis, SWAT, HazMat, explosive device disposal, technical search and rescue, emergency medical services, community emergency response teams, etc. Furthermore, our region has utilized UASI funding to create several nationally deployable capabilities; some, including our regional mobile morgue, have responded to emergencies in other states. In 2015, several of our region's UASI-funded specialty teams and equipment were deployed to support the Umpqua Community College shooting response and recovery operations in Roseburg, Oregon.

Requiring local jurisdictions to continue to build and maintain deployable national capabilities with reduced or no UASI funding would see many of those capabilities decline, ultimately compromising both local and national security and public safety.

Over the years, RDPO partner jurisdictions and agencies have been willing to take on much of the financial burden of maintaining UASI-funded capabilities. Together they also contribute approximately \$225,000 of their own funds annually to the RDPO operating budget. As the RDPO is a voluntary organization, members also donate thousands of volunteer hours towards regional coordination/governance and the execution of projects. At our current UASI funding level (around \$2.5 million per grant cycle passed through the region), a 25% match requirement of \$625,000 would be cost-prohibitive.

Without UASI funds, the Portland region's needs would exceed its means to address the evolving threat picture and rapid changes in technology, which create on-going demands to upgrade tactical methods and purchase advanced equipment and software. Furthermore, as we face new realities of preparing for a Cascadia Subduction Zone earthquake, UASI and other Homeland Security Grant Programs, along with the PDM, are essential to our coordinated planning and other preparedness efforts.

The President's 2018 Budget calls for cuts to programs that "must provide more measurable results." To ensure results in the Portland UASI program, RDPO partners conduct a comprehensive preparedness capabilities gap assessment and analysis every few years, followed by the development of a regional strategy and associated capability investments. We utilize FEMA's Threat and Hazard Identification and Risk Assessment (THIRA) and the after action reports of regional exercises and actual events to determine both actual performance levels and areas needing improvement. In the end, we are both measuring our performance and working to strengthen our capabilities.

Nationwide, the Department of Homeland Security's FY 2017 Budget-in-Brief tells the story of the measured performance impact of the HSGP:

"As a result of [HSGP] grants, states and localities across the country reported capability increases in 12 of the 31 core capabilities compared to 2014. The federal investment in those capabilities pays off each day in communities across the country during incidents large and small. For example, much of the training and equipment used in response to the May 2015 AMTRAK derailment in Philadelphia, including lighting, tourniquets, and technical rescue capabilities, were paid for with grants provided by FEMA."

Beyond UASI, many RDPO partners rely on other HSGP grants, including the State Homeland Security Grant Program (SHSP), the Emergency Management Performance Grant (EMPG) and the Port Security Grant Program (PSGP) to enhance, not supplant, their efforts to reduce disaster risk and enhance national security and public safety. Local emergency management departments are tasked with developing and maintaining an extensive suite of plans and annexes; training and exercising dozens of volunteer emergency coordination/operation center responders; maintaining facilities to coordinate emergencies; and preparing the public for disasters -- all on a lean staffing and program funding model. Relying (as many emergency management agencies do) on the EMPG program to partially fund core positions, cuts to the program would result in critical reductions in staff and program delivery, ultimately increasing disaster vulnerability and risk at the local and regional levels.

SHSP and PSGP funds in our region have shrunk considerably over the years, but when local jurisdictions have been awarded these funds important response capabilities (often shared by two or more jurisdictions) are built and/or enhanced. Finally, at a time when Hurricanes Katrina and Sandy have shown the importance of pre-disaster mitigation and recovery planning to reduce disaster impacts to life and property, the local and regional economy, and the cost of recovery, programs like the PDM should have funding increased, not cut.

As our Oregon and Washington Congressional Delegations, we urge you to reject the President's proposed cuts and support funding these critical programs at or above current funding levels for both FY2017 and FY2018. At a time of heightened concern about terrorism and violent extremism at home, as well as the need to prepare for earthquakes and other hazards and threats of great concern across the nation, increased funding would certainly be justified. These programs play a vital role in ensuring that state and local governments are prepared to respond to future terrorist attacks and have the necessary resources to protect their communities and their residents.

Thank you, in advance, for taking positive action in response to our concerns and for all you do to ensure a more protected and disaster resilient nation.

Sincerely,

The Regional Disaster Preparedness Policy Committee

Councilor Jeanne Stewart, Clark County, Washington (Chair)
Councilor Kathryn Harrington, Metro Regional Government (Vice Chair)
Mayor Ted Wheeler, City of Portland, Oregon
Councilor Bill Turlay, City of Vancouver, Washington
Councilor Lacey Beaty, City of Beaverton, Oregon
Mr. Nolan Young (City Administrator), City of Fairview, Oregon
Councilor Karylann Echols, City of Gresham, Oregon
Councilor Rich Allen, City of Troutdale, Oregon
Clackamas County, Oregon (currently vacant)
Commissioner Margaret Magruder, Columbia County, Oregon
Commissioner Sharon Meieran, Multnomah County, Oregon
Commissioner Dick Schouten, Washington County, Oregon
Mr. Vince Granato (COO), Port of Portland
Mr. Harry Saporta, (Safety and Security Executive), Tri-County Metropolitan Transportation District of Oregon (TriMet)