

May 27, 2020

Mr. Peter T. Gaynor
Administrator
Federal Emergency Management Agency
500 C Street S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20472

Dear Administrator Gaynor,

I write to you today to request your assistance in quickly granting West Virginia access to the Federal Emergency Management Agency's (FEMA) Crisis Counseling Assistance and Training Program (CCP). As of yesterday, West Virginia has 1,808 confirmed COVID-19 cases, officially surpassing the eligibility threshold of 1,000 cases per million residents within the state established by FEMA. According to a Kaiser Family Foundation study, West Virginia is particularly vulnerable to this pandemic with half of our adult population (49.3%) – the highest in the country – at an increased risk of developing a more serious illness in association with COVID-19. My state needs access to CCP to help our emergency personnel better serve their communities during this pandemic and connect West Virginians with the resources they desperately need.

The CCP is critical to the recovery efforts in West Virginia. The quicker this program is instituted, the quicker it could help build a resilient infrastructure for the purpose of assisting survivors in reviewing their disaster recovery options and connecting them with the proper disaster recovery assistance programs. As I'm sure you are aware, the FEMA recovery process can be quite complex, especially for those who have not had to navigate it before. In 2016, for example, many West Virginians experienced that frustration and confusion first hand as they began the long, painful process of recovery from the devastating floods that inundated many parts of our state. It is my sincere hope that CCP will bring the necessary resources to bear to streamline that federal disaster assistance process and make it a little easier to understand.

As stated in the Key Principals of CCP, the program "promotes resilience, empowerment, and recovery, crisis counselors deliver services in communities rather than wait for survivors to seek their assistance, and supplements existing community systems." Quickly utilizing this program will also save money and time down the road when the inevitable happens and another natural disaster occurs. During this public health crisis, West Virginia has seen unique challenges and being able to access programs such as CCP is of vital importance so we can begin to heal as a community.

Thank you for taking the time to consider this request and I look forward to working with you to ensure West Virginia citizens have access to these critical resources that will only help move our state forward during this difficult time.

Warmest regards,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Joe Manchin III". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Joe Manchin III
United States Senator