



February 26, 2021

The Honorable Gary Peters, Chairman  
Committee on Homeland Security and  
Governmental Affairs  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Rob Portman, Ranking Member  
Committee on Homeland Security and  
Governmental Affairs  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Peters and Ranking Member Portman:

On behalf of our over 300 members including firefighters, emergency responders, emergency managers, insurers, engineers, architects, contractors, and manufacturers, as well as consumer organizations, code specialists, and many others committed to building a more disaster resilient nation, the BuildStrong Coalition offers our support for the nomination of Ms. Deanne Criswell to serve as Administrator of the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). We request that you expeditiously consider and approve this nomination that is essential to the nation's ability to prepare for, respond to, recover from, and mitigate against disasters.

Criswell has spent her career in emergency management at the local, state, and federal levels, and she realizes that the effective management of crisis and disaster is a shared responsibility from all levels of government, the private sector, and individuals. She was a firefighter for 21 years; served in the Air National Guard including deployments to Kuwait, Qatar, Afghanistan, and Iraq; managed the Office of Emergency Management for the City of Aurora, Colorado; served as a Federal Coordinating Officer and lead for one of the National Incident Management Assistance Teams for FEMA helping manage devastating disaster; and is currently serving as the Commissioner of the City of New York Department of Emergency Management. She has coordinated major disaster response and recovery throughout her career, including advising top officials, leading strategic change, and steering transformational planning.

She brings exceptional technical expertise and the experience necessary to successfully lead the Agency and the Federal Government's emergency management efforts in this Administration. Criswell is one of the most respected figures in the emergency management community, with a proven ability to communicate effectively and deftly manage responses to the most complicated incidents, including New York City's response to COVID-19. We are confident she will remain committed to fostering partnerships, collaboration, and coordination with all of those involved in the management of and policy making related to disasters while fostering and promoting the principles and ideals of equity and inclusion.

We believe Criswell is uniquely qualified to help navigate FEMA through this extremely challenging period. She will be a valuable asset to the agency's role in coordinating the federal efforts in response to COVID-19 and laying the groundwork for a strong national recovery. Further, we believe she is the right candidate for the job of addressing the rising frequency, severity, and costs of climate impacts and shifting hazards, and one who understands the importance of mitigation and resilience so that we, as a country, can reduce the loss of life and property in the next disaster. She recognizes the need for a strong FEMA Administrator that respects the need for transparency and collaboration, and she has shown her commitment to advance FEMA as an organization, emergency management as a discipline, and resilience as a philosophy.



The BuildStrong Coalition and its members stand ready to support the new administrator on confirmation. We hope you will lead your colleagues to act quickly on the confirmation of Deanne Criswell to ensure that FEMA has the necessary leadership for ongoing COVID-19 activities, as well as to ready our nation as we head into hurricane season, wildfire season, and toward other catastrophic disasters.

Sincerely,

Jimi Grande  
Chairman  
BuildStrong Coalition

Phil Anderson  
President  
BuildStrong Coalition