CHRISTOPHER T. SUNUNU
Governor

STATE OF NEW HAMPSHIRE
OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

May 14, 2017

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

Through: Mr. Paul Ford, Regional Administrator
FEMA Region 1, Boston, MA 02110

RE: Request for Presidential Major Disaster Declaration

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), and implemented by 44 CFR § 206.36, I respectfully request that a major disaster be declared for the State of New Hampshire, specifically for the Counties of Belknap and Carroll. This request is a result of a severe winter storm which occurred from March 14, 2017 to March 15, 2017 that overwhelmed state and local resources.

This request includes a designation of the full Public Assistance Program for Belknap and Carroll counties and a statewide designation of the Hazard Mitigation Grant Program.

As a result of this winter storm, the State of New Hampshire sustained widespread damage including property damage in eight of ten counties. In addition to the eligible damages that occurred, the storm required a comprehensive statewide snow removal response by local and state agencies. This storm considerably strained state and local resources; it consumed staff time and exhausted available resources due to statewide blizzard conditions, strong winds, reduced visibility, and significant debris that restricted travel and storm operations.

The combination of heavy, wet snow and gusting winds on Tuesday, March 14, 2017, left 143,988 individuals without power and damaged over 200 electrical power poles and associated equipment including cross arms, lines, and transformers. The storm also resulted in hundreds of traffic accidents, forced over 500 school closures, and delayed flights in and out of Manchester-Boston Regional Airport. Thousands of customers across 24 communities in Belknap, Carroll, Grafton, and Merrimack counties were without telephone, internet and cable service for several days due to damages to fiber optic circuits cut by falling trees.

These severe conditions created damages that overwhelmed the capabilities of state and local jurisdictions and required an immediate, urgent response. The overwhelming damages and conditions were most severe in Belknap and Carroll counties, both located in central New Hampshire, and resulted in requests for state assistance. The effects of this storm in Belknap and Carroll counties evident in the disaster expenses that exceeded their per capita benchmarks, Belknap County at $281,629 ($4.69/resident) and Carroll County at $1,887,909 ($39.48/resident) as required for a request under the Stafford Act. The

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figures captured in Enclosure B reflect uninsured losses and only those that meet FEMA project eligibility; the overall losses were significantly higher.

Within these two counties, the communities that sustained the most eligible damage include Moultonborough, Tuftonboro, and Wolfeboro in Carroll County and Alton, Belmont, and Center Harbor in Belknap County.

The Town of Moultonborough reported unconfirmed sustained wind gusts of up to 75 mph resulting in structural damage to several town-owned buildings including its public safety building, town hall, two historic buildings and the Lions Club. The Emergency Operations Center (EOC) generator, located in the fire house, was permanently damaged during the storm due to the wind gusts that pushed snow into the vents. The town was forced to rent a temporary generator in order to keep the EOC up and running. All schools were closed for three days, from Tuesday, March 14 through Thursday, March 16. The community opened a shelter at the high school on Wednesday and Thursday, which also served as a warming center on Friday. Parts of the community were not accessible and did not have landline telephone communication for four days.

To put the damages in perspective, the Town of Moultonborough (2010 pop. 4,044) suffered nearly $120,000 in FEMA verified damages as a result of debris removal, emergency protective measures and damage to the public safety building. The resulting per capita damage for the community was $29.55.

In the Town of Belmont, the fire department received a 300 percent increase in calls for assistance during the height of the incident. As the storm worsened, low visibility and whiteout conditions impaired the fire department's capability to respond; first responders were unable to service an entire area of Belmont. The Town of Belmont requested support from the neighboring Town of Gilmanton through a mutual aid agreement, but Gilmanton was unable to respond due to the conditions and road closures. Parts of the community were without telephone service for five days. Children in Belmont who attend school in the neighboring Town of Gilford were unable to attend school for four days due to the closure of Route 140, a major thoroughfare in the region. During the storm, the Belmont Emergency Management Director requested that the State Emergency Operations Center (SEOC) send out a notification via NH Alerts, the state's mass notification system, to advise residents of the open shelter. Due to the power and telephone line outages, the community required state assistance.

Pursuant to the severity of this storm, on March 14, 2017, I executed the State Emergency Operations Plan (SEOP) with the activation of the SEOC to a Partial Level. The nature and amount of state and local governmental resources that have been or will be used to alleviate the conditions of this disaster are as follows:

1. The SEOP was activated on March 14, 2017 and I instructed the Director of Homeland Security and Emergency Management to activate and staff the SEOC. The SEOC was activated to monitor the situation, coordinate state response activities and to respond to local requests for assistance and resources. The Director initiated the appropriate Emergency Support Function (ESF) lead agencies to ensure an adequate and timely response to the needs of our state.
2. ESFs that were activated at the time of the SEOC activation included: Transportation (ESF 1), Communications and Alerting (ESF 2), Public Works and Engineering (ESF 3), Emergency Management (ESF 5), Mass Care, Housing and Human Services (ESF 6), Health and Medical (ESF 8), Public Safety and Law Enforcement (ESF 13), Energy (ESF 12), and Public Information (ESF 15).
3. The NH Department of Health and Human Services (NHDHHS) Emergency Services Unit (ESU) coordinated mass care needs across the State. It monitored hospital emergency rooms for Carbon Monoxide (CO) admissions and storm-related injuries and deaths. The storm had one CO

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exposure in the Town of Rindge in Cheshire County and one storm related fatality of a 16 year old, due to a motor vehicle accident in Gilford in Belknap County. Dozens of injuries were also reported due to motor vehicle accidents throughout the storm.

4. The NH Department of Transportation (NHDOT) coordinated transportation, public works and engineering needs across the state. Prior to the storm, crews treated roadways in anticipation of heavy precipitation. In response to the storm, NHDOT held force account workers on March 14, 2017, to work overtime and into the next day. They called in extra personnel, including contract labor, to aid the response efforts, primarily to cut and push debris to the side of the road to allow for plowing and sanding operations. These efforts continued from 11:30 p.m. on Tuesday, March 14 and concluded at 6:00 p.m. on Wednesday, March 15. The roads in Belknap and Carroll counties required debris removal, particularly on Routes 109, 109A, and 171 thoroughfares that are all essential for emergency personnel to reach citizens and to maintain access to the area hospitals that serve the surrounding communities, such as Huggins Hospital and Lakes Region General Hospital. Response to this disaster was extremely dangerous; one NHDOT crew lost mobility on a two-mile stretch of Route 109 for four hours, as trees were falling. NHDOT had to increase staffing at the Transportation Management Center (TMC), which serves as the central 24-hour dispatch center, to help with the dispatching of NHDOT equipment. Some emergency response efforts were delayed up to four hours due to blocked roads.
5. The NH Division of State Police (NHSP) increased staffing levels to ensure the safety of the citizens. Over the multi-day response, the NHSP was challenged in their ability to provide traffic control on closed highways and roads that allow NHDOT and local jurisdictions to clear snow and debris from the roadways. They responded to hundreds of accidents and disabled vehicles, as well hundreds of other storm-related calls for service. They also staffed the ESF 13 desk in the SEOC to coordinate public safety needs across the state.
6. The Commissioner of the Department of Safety issued a State Emergency Declaration during the storm for the delivery of propane, natural gas, fuel oil, gasoline, foodstuffs and the repair of utility outages within the State of NH. The declaration facilitated relief from 49 CFR Parts 390-397 of the Federal Motor Carrier Regulations adopted pursuant to RSA 266:72-a. This is due to the fact that motor carriers providing direct assistance in emergency relief may utilize the provisions of 49 CFR Section 390.23(a) for motor carriers providing delivery of propane and natural gas to homes and businesses within the State of New Hampshire, delivery of gasoline to filling stations, delivery of foodstuffs and medicines to grocery and drug stores, and vital work by local utility crews.
7. At the height of this event, over a dozen local EOCs opened to respond to the needs and safety of their communities. In Carroll County, Moultonborough, Tuftonboro and Wolfeboro activated EOCs. In Rockingham County, the following EOCs were opened: Kingston, New Castle, Plaistow, Rye, Salem, Seabrook, and Portsmouth (monitoring). In Merrimack County, the Town of Bow opened their EOC. Milton and Strafford in Strafford County also opened their EOCs. Coordinating activities included potential sheltering of residents, snow and debris removal from roadways, health and welfare checks to homes and coordination of response and recovery efforts.
8. Over the course of the event, five local shelters and warming centers were opened for residents and visitors. The American Red Cross provided staffing for the duration of our SEOC activation as well as support and resources for sheltering needs.
9. The NH Electric Cooperative (NHEC) suffered overwhelming damages, including 119 broken poles, 74 damaged transformers, 54 broken crossarms and approximately 10,000 feet of damaged conductor cable from this storm. The NHEC is a private non-profit rural utility cooperative which provides services in 115 of the 234 communities in the state. It supplies the majority of power to Belknap and Carroll counties. To restore services, NHEC requested 75 external mutual aid and contract crews to assist NHEC staff with debris removal and repairs to utilities. The combined total of NHEC broken poles far exceeded the 83 poles destroyed in Hurricanes Irene and Sandy. As a cooperative, costs incurred by NHEC are distributed amongst their members to sustain the

organization. A storm of this severity and magnitude could prove detrimental to the financial stability of the organization.

At my request, a Joint Preliminary Damage Assessment (PDA) was requested on April 10, 2017. The assessment was conducted from April 17, 2017 to April 19, 2017, and on April 28, 2017. The PDA teams were comprised of representatives from the NHEC, municipal, state and federal agencies. As demonstrated in the Public Assistance enclosures, the state indicator has exceeded $1.43 per capita. Current state and local assessments verified by FEMA exceed the statewide threshold of $1,883,368; the eligible expenses were $2,169,538 from this event.

While the Joint PDAs were focused on Belknap and Carroll counties, Initial Damage Assessments (IDAs) coordinated by HSEM prior to the Joint PDAs reported damages in six other counties. One area hit particularly hard was the coastal part of Rockingham County. While it did not meet its damage threshold, the county reported nearly $146,000 in damages. FEMA did not verify these damages as the county would not have met its threshold and the PDA process would have been an additional burden to primarily volunteer-based communities.

The City of Portsmouth in Rockingham County covered the neighboring community of New Castle for fire suppression due to the response requirements for the amount of downed trees, poles and wires across the community.

In the Town of Bartlett in Carroll County, a local police officer's home was destroyed beyond repair by falling trees and high winds. The home was deemed uninhabitable and his family barely escaped unharmed.

Over the last 12 months, the State of New Hampshire has and continues to experience a number of challenges that have stretched our state and local resources. Although not considered a natural disaster, the Opioid Crisis tops the list. This crisis has required personnel from state and local governments to divert all available resources to combat the epidemic of addiction. In 2016, there were 470 deaths in New Hampshire as a result of drug overdoses, with nine cases still pending analysis. Over the last year, there have been 43.52 emergency department visits per 100,000 population for Opioid-related use in New Hampshire.

Additionally, we have experienced several disaster-related events, and we continue to address ongoing recovery efforts from previous presidentially-declared disasters. Although not comprehensive, the following list of incidents capture events over the last year in which state and local jurisdictions expended a considerable amount of their own funds for response and recovery efforts:

- Stoddard Forest Fire FMAG DR-5123
    - Stoddard, NH Forest Fire, which grew to more than five alarms, burned 190 acres, threatened more than 100 homes, required the evacuation of 28 people from 17 residences to a shelter, summoned more than 50 firefighting units, and also required the use of three helicopters to coordinate water drops on April 21, 2016 through April 22, 2016.
- July 18, 2016 Severe Storm
    - Severe thunderstorms came through the state with reports of possible tornadoes in Pittsburg and Plaistow. A family of eight was displaced in Madison, NH as their house was damaged by the storm. The American Red Cross and ESF 6 coordinated sheltering support for the family. The National Weather Service (NWS) in Gray, ME confirmed an EF 0 Tornado in Pittsburg, NH; hundreds of trees were uprooted with dozens snapped

and wires down in multiple locations. NWS advised that the damage was consistent with maximum winds of 75 mph.

- July 23, 2016 Severe Storm
  - The SEOC and several local EOCs were activated due to a highly organized line of severe thunderstorms in the central part of the state. Over 60,000 power outages with downed trees and wires resulted in numerous local road closures. A home was evacuated in Loudon, NH, due to tree damage. Communities requested assistance with coordinating utilities and setting up road barricades.
- September 14, 2016 Brentwood Incident
  - The SEOC and Brentwood EOC were activated for several hours in response to a law enforcement event in Brentwood, NH. A suicidal subject barricaded himself inside his home and was believed to have had at least one gun and possibly involved a clandestine lab. Residents were asked to shelter in place during the incident. This followed a 2014 incident in which a police officer was ambushed and killed in the same neighborhood. The subject in the 2014 incident blew up his own house after killing the police officer.

Prior to the March 14, 2017 Winter Storm Event, the SEOC was also activated a dozen times over the course of the winter due to severe storms that had been forecasted to bring significant precipitation and have high potential for downed trees and wires. These storms resulted in a busy winter season for the treatment and maintenance of roadways, numerous motor vehicle accidents, and hundreds of school closures. The number of storms over a short period of time strained response resources at both the state and local levels.

NHDOT used the 3rd highest amount of salt this season at 225,947 tons, since 1942 when tracking salt use began. In 2008,NHDOT used 249,756 tons of salt and in 2003 they used 244,859 tons of salt. The average salt use per year since 1942 is 119,939 tons. The State's DOT Winter Maintenance Snow Removal and Ice Control Policy is based on an average accumulation of 1" per hour. Precipitation over 1" per hour will result in higher accumulations on the road than the current policy indicates. When snow falls over 2" per hour, travelling in these conditions will be very difficult for even the most experienced winter drivers. As stated in the attached weather summary provided by NWS Gray, this particular winter storm had snowfall rates of 2-3" per hour.

I look forward to your response. Please do not hesitate to contact me or my staff with any questions.

Sincerely,

Christopher T. Sununu
Governor

Enclosures:
Weather Summary
OMB No. 1660-0009/FEMA Form 010-0-13
B: Public Assistance

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