



COMMITTEE ON HOMELAND SECURITY

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Joint Hearing Statement of Oversight, Management, & Accountability Subcommittee Chairman Lou Correa (D-CA)

FEMA: Building a Workforce Prepared and Ready to Respond

January 20, 2022

We're here this morning to discuss the FEMA workforce. The men and women who work to support FEMA's mission are the backbone of the agency. From the field operations teams and reservists who deploy to disaster sites within hours of an emergency declaration, to those who work behind the scenes to administer grant funding and organize countless logistics. The FEMA workforce is as varied as the tasks the agency is asked to carry out.

During the last few years, FEMA has had to juggle the ongoing Federal response to numerous record breaking disasters, in addition to the COVID-19 pandemic, and the resettlement of our Afghan allies. And that doesn't capture all of FEMA's duties. It is a testament to the skill and flexibility of FEMA's workforce that the agency is able to support the Federal government's efforts in so many different areas. Yet it cannot be said that FEMA employees haven't felt the strain of being pulled in so many directions. The workforce is suffering from an increase in burnout and in recent years significantly more employees have left the agency than usual. It is absolutely critical that FEMA address these rising attrition rates, and prioritize the needs of its people.

In the past, FEMA has failed to properly prioritize workforce management issues like recruitment and retention and the agency has struggled to deal with issues of harassment and discrimination within the workplace. But in recent years FEMA has taken significant and concrete steps to foster a more inclusive and resilient workforce. With the support of Congress, in 2019, FEMA created an Office of Professional Responsibility to better investigate allegations of employee misconduct. And under the Biden Administration, FEMA has a renewed focus on addressing longterm workforce challenges by increasing the availability and quality of training and educational opportunities for the emergency management community. Providing opportunities for advancement and the development of new skills is important for retaining the agency's skilled workforce. Yet there is still more to be done.

I look forward to hearing from our witnesses about what they would like to see FEMA do to demonstrate an ongoing commitment to supporting its employees. As well as how we in Congress can assist this effort. It can be all too easy to get caught up in the immediacy of responding to the next big hurricane, wildfire, or tornado. But without doing the consistent and meaningful work to listen and respond to the needs of the FEMA community on a continuous basis, the agency puts in jeopardy its ability to effectively carry out its mission.

I look forward to taking the time today to examine this issue, to celebrate the accomplishments of this workforce, and to look ahead at the next steps FEMA must take to support its people.

#

Media contact: Adam Comis at (202) 225-9978