

ADAM B. SCHIFF
UNITED STATES SENATOR
CALIFORNIA

112 HART SENATE
OFFICE BUILDING
WASHINGTON, DC 20510

(202) 224-3841

schiff.senate.gov

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

COMMITTEES

JUDICIARY
RANKING MEMBER, SUBCOMMITTEE ON
INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY

ENVIRONMENT AND PUBLIC WORKS
RANKING MEMBER, SUBCOMMITTEE ON
FISHERIES, WATER, AND WILDLIFE

AGRICULTURE, NUTRITION,
AND FORESTRY

SMALL BUSINESS AND
ENTREPRENEURSHIP

May 21, 2025

The Honorable Kristi Noem
Secretary of Homeland Security
2707 Martin Luther King Jr. Ave SE
Washington, DC 20528

Mr. David Richardson
Senior Official Performing the Duties of
FEMA Administrator
500 C Street SW
Washington, DC 20472

Dear Secretary Noem and Mr. Richardson,

I write today to express grave concern over the impact that the cancellation of FEMA funds for earthquake retrofitting under the Building Resilient Infrastructure and Communities (BRIC) program. The cancellation of this program includes the cancellation of \$33 million in funding that could have enabled the retrofit of between 750 and 1,500 multi-family buildings. I urge you to reinstate this critical source of funding so Californians can make the necessary investments to prepare their homes and housing units for the next major earthquake before it hits.

California is projected to lose an average of \$9.6 billion per year from earthquake damage, and California accounts for roughly 65% of the country's annual earthquake cost. If the yearly earthquake loss projections remain consistent, California is expected to lose \$288 billion from earthquake damage over the next three decades. And historically, when major earthquakes have hit California, it has taken years and in some cases decades for cities to recover.

California's state and local governments recognize the importance of helping homeowners prepare before the "big one" strikes. Many cities require property owners to retrofit certain types of buildings, and the state has developed and successfully executed a residential mitigation grant program that has provided \$95 million in funding for over 30,000 retrofits of homes and larger housing units alike. California is proactively and responsibly making an investment in earthquake damage mitigation, which saves \$3 for every \$1 spent. But California relies on federal support to assist with the cost of retrofitting multi-family soft story homes that are most vulnerable to damage from earthquakes. By eliminating this critical source of federal funding, we are leaving those who can least afford it at the greatest risk of displacement, which could cost lives. And as property owners struggle to cover the cost of complying with ordinances that require building retrofits, in the absence of federal assistance, we could see the costs passed on to

tenants in the midst of an affordability crisis, not to mention serious safety concerns for residents.

We have seen the scale of damage that can occur when soft story buildings fail to receive adequate upgrades. When the Loma Prieta earthquake hit San Francisco in 1989, roughly half of the city's 16,000 housing units were in soft story buildings. Those buildings were immediately rendered uninhabitable, leaving countless residents displaced. When the next major earthquake hits California, we must be prepared, and we need federal support to do so.

In California, earthquakes are not a question of if, but when. This funding is essential to the state's ability to adequately prepare for when the next major earthquake hits. I urge you to reinstate this funding to allow California to prepare for the inevitable, to protect property, and save lives. This move must be reversed before tragedy strikes next, whether it happens in a blue state or a red state. Thank you for your urgent attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Adam B. Schiff". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Adam" written in a smaller, more compact script than the last name "Schiff", which is larger and more prominent.