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118TH CONGRESS
2^D SESSION

H. R. 1796

[Report No. 118–390, Part I]

To improve individual assistance provided by the Federal Emergency Management Agency, and for other purposes.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

MARCH 24, 2023

Ms. TITUS (for herself, Mr. GRAVES of Louisiana, and Mr. CARTER of Louisiana) introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure, and in addition to the Committees on Financial Services, and Small Business, for a period to be subsequently determined by the Speaker, in each case for consideration of such provisions as fall within the jurisdiction of the committee concerned

FEBRUARY 14, 2024

Additional sponsors: Mr. MOLINARO, Mrs. GONZÁLEZ-COLÓN, Mr. EDWARDS, Ms. BALINT, Ms. TOKUDA, Mr. CASE, and Mr. NEGUSE

FEBRUARY 14, 2024

Reported from the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure with an amendment

[Strike out all after the enacting clause and insert the part printed in *italic*]

FEBRUARY 14, 2024

Committees on Financial Services and Small Business discharged; committed to the Committee of the Whole House on the State of the Union and ordered to be printed

[For text of introduced bill, see copy of bill as introduced on March 24, 2023]

A BILL

To improve individual assistance provided by the Federal
Emergency Management Agency, and for other purposes.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*
 2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

3 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE; TABLE OF CONTENTS.**

4 (a) *SHORT TITLE.*—*This Act may be cited as the “Dis-*
 5 *aster Survivors Fairness Act of 2023”.*

6 (b) *TABLE OF CONTENTS.*—*The table of contents for*
 7 *this Act is as follows:*

Sec. 1. Short title; table of contents.

Sec. 2. Information sharing for federal agencies.

Sec. 3. Universal application for individual assistance.

Sec. 4. Repair and rebuilding.

Sec. 5. Direct assistance.

Sec. 6. State-managed housing pilot authority.

Sec. 7. Management costs.

Sec. 8. Funding for online guides for post-disaster assistance.

Sec. 9. Individual assistance dashboard.

Sec. 10. FEMA reports.

Sec. 11. Sheltering of emergency response personnel.

Sec. 12. Improved rental assistance.

Sec. 13. GAO report on preliminary damage assessments.

Sec. 14. Applicability.

Sec. 15. GAO report to Congress on challenges under public assistance alternative procedures.

8 (c) *DEFINITIONS.*—*Except as otherwise provided, the*
 9 *terms used in this Act have the meanings given such terms*
 10 *in section 102 of the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and*
 11 *Emergency Assistance Act (42 U.S.C. 5122).*

12 **SEC. 2. INFORMATION SHARING FOR FEDERAL AGENCIES.**

13 (a) *ESTABLISHMENT OF UNIFIED DISASTER APPLICA-*
 14 *TION SYSTEM.*—

15 (1) *IN GENERAL.*—*The Administrator of the Fed-*
 16 *eral Emergency Management Agency shall establish*
 17 *and maintain a web-based interagency electronic in-*

1 *formation sharing system, to be known as the “uni-*
2 *fied disaster application system”, to—*

3 *(A) facilitate the administration of the uni-*
4 *versal application for direct Federal disaster as-*
5 *sistance established under section 3;*

6 *(B) carry out the purposes of disaster as-*
7 *sistance programs swiftly, efficiently, and in ac-*
8 *cordance with applicable laws, regulations, and*
9 *the privacy and data protections provided under*
10 *this section; and*

11 *(C) support the detection, prevention, and*
12 *investigation of waste, fraud, abuse, or discrimi-*
13 *nation in the administration of disaster assist-*
14 *ance programs.*

15 *(2) AUTHORITIES OF ADMINISTRATOR.—In es-*
16 *tablishing and maintaining the unified disaster ap-*
17 *plication system under this subsection, the Adminis-*
18 *trator may collect and maintain disaster assistance*
19 *information received from a disaster assistance agen-*
20 *cy, a block grant recipient, or an applicant for a dis-*
21 *aster assistance program and share such information*
22 *with any other disaster assistance agency or block*
23 *grant recipient using such system.*

1 (3) *REQUIREMENTS.*—*The Administrator shall*
2 *ensure that the unified disaster application system es-*
3 *tablished and maintained under this subsection—*

4 (A) *allows an applicant to receive status*
5 *updates on an application for disaster assistance*
6 *programs submitted through such system;*

7 (B) *allows for applicants to update disaster*
8 *assistance information throughout the recovery*
9 *journeys of such applicants in accordance with*
10 *established application timeframes;*

11 (C) *allows for the distribution to applicants*
12 *of information about additional recovery re-*
13 *sources that may be available in a disaster*
14 *stricken area;*

15 (D) *provides an applicant with information*
16 *and documentation relating to an application*
17 *for a disaster assistance program submitted by*
18 *such applicant; and*

19 (E) *contains any other capabilities deter-*
20 *mined necessary by the head of a disaster assist-*
21 *ance agency.*

22 (b) *DATA SECURITY.*—*The Administrator may facili-*
23 *tate the collection of disaster assistance information into*
24 *the unified disaster application system established under*

1 subsection (a) only after the following requirements have
2 been met:

3 (1) *The Administrator certifies that the unified*
4 *disaster application system substantially complies*
5 *with the data security standards and best practices*
6 *established pursuant to subchapter II of chapter 35 of*
7 *title 44, United States Code, and any other applicable*
8 *Federal information security policy.*

9 (2) *The Secretary of Homeland Security pub-*
10 *lishes a privacy impact assessment for the unified*
11 *disaster application system, in accordance with sec-*
12 *tion 208(b)(1)(B) of the E-Government Act of 2002*
13 *(44 U.S.C. 3501 note).*

14 (3) *The Administrator, after consulting with dis-*
15 *aster assistance agencies, publishes standard rules of*
16 *behavior for disaster assistance agencies, block grant*
17 *recipients, and personnel granted access to disaster*
18 *assistance information to protect such information*
19 *from improper disclosure.*

20 (c) *COLLECTION AND SHARING OF ADDITIONAL*
21 *RECORDS AND INFORMATION.—*

22 (1) *IN GENERAL.—The Administrator may au-*
23 *thorize the additional collection, maintenance, shar-*
24 *ing, and use of disaster assistance information by*
25 *publishing a notice on the unified disaster applica-*

1 *tion system established under subsection (a) that in-*
2 *cludes a detailed description of—*

3 *(A) the specific amendments to the collec-*
4 *tion, maintenance, and sharing of disaster as-*
5 *istance information authorized;*

6 *(B) why each such amendment to how dis-*
7 *aster assistance information is collected, main-*
8 *tained, or shared is necessary to carry out the*
9 *purposes of a disaster assistance program and*
10 *consistent with the fair information practice*
11 *principles; and*

12 *(C) the disaster assistance agencies and*
13 *block grant recipients that will be granted access*
14 *to the additional information to carry out the*
15 *purposes of any disaster assistance program.*

16 *(2) NOTICE AND PUBLICATION REQUIREMENTS.—*

17 *The publication of a notice under paragraph (1) of a*
18 *revision to the unified disaster application system of*
19 *records prior to any new collection, or uses, of Pri-*
20 *vacancy Act categories of records, to carry out the pur-*
21 *poses of a disaster assistance program with regard to*
22 *a disaster declared by the President under section 401*
23 *or 501 of the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and*
24 *Emergency Assistance Act (42 U.S.C. 5170; 5191),*
25 *shall be deemed to satisfy the notice and publication*

1 *requirements of section 552a(e)(4) of title 5, United*
2 *States Code, for the entire period of performance for*
3 *any assistance provided under a disaster assistance*
4 *program.*

5 (3) *WAIVER OF INFORMATION COLLECTION RE-*
6 *QUIREMENTS.—*

7 (A) *IN GENERAL.—Upon the declaration of*
8 *a major disaster or emergency pursuant to sec-*
9 *tions 401 or 501 of the Robert T. Stafford Dis-*
10 *aster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act (42*
11 *U.S.C. 5170; 5191) by the President, the Admin-*
12 *istrator may waive the requirements of sub-*
13 *chapter I of chapter 35 of title 44, United States*
14 *Code, with respect to voluntary collection of in-*
15 *formation for the entire period of performance*
16 *for any assistance provided under a disaster as-*
17 *sistance program.*

18 (B) *TRANSPARENCY.—Upon exercising the*
19 *waiver authority under subparagraph (A), the*
20 *Administrator shall—*

21 (i) *promptly post on a website of the*
22 *Federal Emergency Management Agency a*
23 *brief justification for such waiver, the an-*
24 *ticipated period of time such waiver will be*
25 *in effect, and the disaster assistance offices*

1 *within the Federal Emergency Management*
2 *Agency to which such waiver shall apply;*
3 *and*

4 *(ii) update the information relating to*
5 *such waiver, as applicable.*

6 (4) *GAO REVIEW OF WAIVER OF INFORMATION*
7 *COLLECTION REQUIREMENTS.—*

8 (A) *IN GENERAL.—Not later than 1 year*
9 *after the date of enactment of this Act, the*
10 *Comptroller General of the United States shall*
11 *issue a report describing the benefits and poten-*
12 *tial risks associated with authorizing the waiver*
13 *of the information collection requirements de-*
14 *scribed in paragraph (3).*

15 (B) *CONTENTS.—The report required under*
16 *subparagraph (A) shall include an assessment of*
17 *the extent to which a waiver described in para-*
18 *graph (3) would—*

19 *(i) affect the paperwork burden for in-*
20 *dividuals, small businesses, State, local and*
21 *tribal governments, and other persons;*

22 *(ii) affect the consistent application of*
23 *Federal laws relating to—*

24 (I) *privacy and confidentiality;*

25 (II) *security of information; and*

1 (III) access to information; and
2 (iii) encourage or deter a State or
3 other entity from participating in the vol-
4 untary collection of information for the du-
5 ration of a major disaster or emergency.

6 (d) *USE BY OTHER FEDERAL AGENCIES.*—

7 (1) *IN GENERAL.*—The Administrator may per-
8 mit a Federal agency other than a disaster assistance
9 agency listed in subparagraphs (A) through (D) of
10 subsection (f)(3) to use the unified disaster applica-
11 tion system established under subsection (a) for the
12 purpose of facilitating disaster-related assistance if
13 such agency enters into an agreement containing the
14 terms described in paragraph (2).

15 (2) *AGENCY AGREEMENT.*—An agreement entered
16 into under paragraph (1) shall contain the following
17 terms:

18 (A) *The Federal agency shall—*

19 (i) collect, share, maintain, and use
20 disaster assistance information in compli-
21 ance with this section and any policies of
22 the Federal Emergency Management Agency
23 and any information protection and use
24 policies of such Federal agency; and

1 (ii) train any personnel granted access
2 to disaster assistance information on the
3 rules of behavior established by the Admin-
4 istrator under subsection (b)(3).

5 (B) In the event of any unauthorized disclo-
6 sure of disaster assistance information, the Fed-
7 eral agency shall—

8 (i) notify the Administrator within 24
9 hours of discovering any such unauthorized
10 disclosure;

11 (ii) cooperate fully with the Adminis-
12 trator in the investigation and remediation
13 of any such disclosure;

14 (iii) cooperate fully in the prosecution
15 of a person responsible for such disclosure;
16 and

17 (iv) assume the responsibility for any
18 compensation, civil liability, or other reme-
19 diation measures, whether awarded by a
20 judgment of a court or agreed as a com-
21 promise of any potential claims by or on
22 behalf of an applicant, including by obtain-
23 ing credit monitoring and remediation serv-
24 ices, for an improper disclosure that is—

1 (I) caused, directly or indirectly,
2 by the acts or omissions of officers, em-
3 ployees, and contractors of the agency;
4 or

5 (II) from any electronic system of
6 records that is created or maintained
7 by the agency pursuant to section
8 552a(e) of title 5, United States Code.

9 (3) *PUBLICATION OF AGENCY AGREEMENT.*—The
10 Administrator shall publish an agency agreement en-
11 tered into under this subsection on the same website
12 as the unified disaster application system established
13 under subsection (a).

14 (e) *RULE OF CONSTRUCTION.*—The sharing and use of
15 disaster assistance information that is subject to the re-
16 quirements of section 552a of title 5, United States Code,
17 by disaster assistance agencies and block grant recipients—

18 (1) shall not be—

19 (A) construed as a matching program for
20 purposes of section 552a(a)(8) of such title; or

21 (B) subject to the remaining computer
22 matching provisions of section 552a of such title;
23 and

24 (2) shall be in addition to any other law pro-
25 viding for the sharing or use of such information.

1 (f) *DEFINITIONS.*—*In this section:*

2 (1) *APPLICANT.*—*The term “applicant” means—*

3 (A) *a person who applies for disaster assist-*
4 *ance from a disaster assistance program; and*

5 (B) *a person on whose behalf a person de-*
6 *scribed in subparagraph (A) has applied for dis-*
7 *aster assistance.*

8 (2) *BLOCK GRANT RECIPIENT.*—*The term “block*
9 *grant recipient” means a State, local government, or*
10 *Indian Tribe that receives assistance through the dis-*
11 *aster assistance program described in paragraph*
12 *(5)(B)(i).*

13 (3) *DISASTER ASSISTANCE AGENCY.*—*The term*
14 *“disaster assistance agency” means—*

15 (A) *the Federal Emergency Management*
16 *Agency;*

17 (B) *the Department of Housing and Urban*
18 *Development;*

19 (C) *the Small Business Administration;*

20 (D) *the Department of Agriculture; and*

21 (E) *any other Federal agency that the Ad-*
22 *ministrator permits to use the unified disaster*
23 *application system under subsection (d).*

24 (4) *DISASTER ASSISTANCE INFORMATION.*—*The*
25 *term “disaster assistance information” includes any*

1 *personal, demographic, biographical, geographical, fi-*
2 *nancial information, or other information that a dis-*
3 *aster assistance agency or block grant recipient is au-*
4 *thorized to collect, maintain, share, or use to process*
5 *an application for disaster assistance or otherwise*
6 *carry out a disaster assistance program.*

7 (5) *DISASTER ASSISTANCE PROGRAM.*—*The term*
8 *“disaster assistance program” means—*

9 (A) *any program that provides assistance to*
10 *individuals and households under title IV or title*
11 *V of the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and*
12 *Emergency Assistance Act (42 U.S.C. 5170 et*
13 *seq.); or*

14 (B) *any other assistance program carried*
15 *out by a disaster assistance agency that provides*
16 *assistance to an individual, household, or orga-*
17 *nization related to a major disaster or emergency*
18 *declared under sections 401 or 501 of such Act,*
19 *including—*

20 (i) *assistance for activities related to*
21 *disaster relief, long-term recovery, restora-*
22 *tion of infrastructure and housing, eco-*
23 *nomical revitalization, and mitigation that*
24 *are authorized under title I of the Housing*

1 *and Community Development Act of 1974*
2 *(42 U.S.C. 5301 et seq.);*

3 *(ii) any loan that is authorized under*
4 *section 7(b) of the Small Business Act (15*
5 *U.S.C. 636(b)); and*

6 *(iii) the distribution of food benefit al-*
7 *lotments as authorized under section 412 of*
8 *the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and*
9 *Emergency Assistance Act (42 U.S.C. 5179)*
10 *and section 5(h) of the Food Stamp Act of*
11 *1977 (7 U.S.C. 2014(h)).*

12 **SEC. 3. UNIVERSAL APPLICATION FOR INDIVIDUAL ASSIST-**
13 **ANCE.**

14 *(a) UNIVERSAL APPLICATION.—The Administrator of*
15 *the Federal Emergency Management Agency shall develop*
16 *and establish a universal application for direct Federal dis-*
17 *aster assistance for individuals in areas impacted by emer-*
18 *gencies or disasters.*

19 *(b) CONSULTATION AND SUPPORT.—*

20 *(1) CONSULTATION.—In carrying out this sec-*
21 *tion, the Administrator shall consult with the fol-*
22 *lowing:*

23 *(A) The Director of the Office of Manage-*
24 *ment and Budget.*

1 (B) *The Administrator of the Small Busi-*
2 *ness Administration.*

3 (C) *The Secretary of Housing and Urban*
4 *Development.*

5 (D) *The Secretary of Agriculture.*

6 (2) *SUPPORT.—The entities described in para-*
7 *graph (1) shall provide prompt support to the Admin-*
8 *istrator.*

9 (c) *SURVEY.—The application established under sub-*
10 *section (a) shall include a voluntary survey to collect the*
11 *demographic data of an applicant.*

12 (d) *GAO ASSESSMENT ON IDENTITY THEFT AND DIS-*
13 *ASTER FRAUD IN DISASTER ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS.—Not*
14 *later than 1 year after the date of enactment of this Act,*
15 *the Comptroller General of the United States shall—*

16 (1) *conduct an assessment of improper and po-*
17 *tentially fraudulent Federal disaster assistance for in-*
18 *dividuals made to survivors of major disasters de-*
19 *clared in 2020 and 2021, including through identity*
20 *theft; and*

21 (2) *submit to the Committee on Transportation*
22 *and Infrastructure of the House of Representatives*
23 *and the Committee on Homeland Security and Gov-*
24 *ernmental Affairs of the Senate a report that de-*
25 *scribes—*

1 (A) the prevalence of improper and poten-
2 tially fraudulent Federal disaster assistance for
3 individuals made to registrants who used invalid
4 information to apply for disaster assistance, in-
5 cluding through identity theft;

6 (B) the number of disaster survivors whose
7 claims for Federal disaster assistance for indi-
8 viduals were denied due to another individual
9 filing a fraudulent application using their per-
10 sonal identifying information;

11 (C) the adequacy of existing fraud preven-
12 tion protocols in place on the Federal Emergency
13 Management Agency’s online application for
14 Federal disaster assistance for individuals; and

15 (D) recommendations for improving the
16 identity verification protocols in place for Fed-
17 eral disaster assistance for individuals.

18 **SEC. 4. REPAIR AND REBUILDING.**

19 (a) *IN GENERAL.*—Section 408(b)(1) of the Robert T.
20 Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act (42
21 U.S.C. 5174(b)(1)) is amended—

22 (1) by striking “rendered uninhabitable” and in-
23 serting “damaged by a major disaster”; and

1 (2) by striking “uninhabitable, as a result of
2 damage caused by a major disaster” and inserting
3 “damaged by a major disaster”.

4 (b) HAZARD MITIGATION.—Section 408 of the Robert
5 T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act
6 (42 U.S.C. 5174) is amended—

7 (1) in subsection (c) by adding at the end the fol-
8 lowing:

9 “(5) HAZARD MITIGATION.—

10 “(A) IN GENERAL.—The President may pro-
11 vide financial assistance to individuals and
12 households whose primary residence, utilities, or
13 residential infrastructure are damaged by a
14 major disaster, for cost-effective hazard mitiga-
15 tion measures that reduce threats to life and
16 property, or future damage to such residence,
17 utilities, or infrastructure in future disasters.

18 “(B) RELATIONSHIP TO OTHER ASSIST-
19 ANCE.—A recipient of assistance provided under
20 this paragraph shall not be required to show that
21 the assistance can be met through other means,
22 except insurance proceeds.”; and

23 (2) in subsection (h)—

1 (A) in paragraph (1) by inserting “, finan-
2 cial assistance for hazard mitigation under sub-
3 section (c)(5)(A),” after “subsection (c)(1)(A)(i);”

4 (B) in paragraph (3) by striking “para-
5 graphs (1) and (2)” and inserting “paragraphs
6 (1), (2), and (3)”; and

7 (C) by adding at the end the following:

8 “(5) *HAZARD MITIGATION.*—The maximum fi-
9 nancial assistance any individual or household may
10 receive under subsection (c)(5) shall be equivalent to
11 the amount set forth in paragraph (1) with respect to
12 a single major disaster.”.

13 **SEC. 5. DIRECT ASSISTANCE.**

14 (a) *IN GENERAL.*—Section 408(c) of the Robert T.
15 Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act (42
16 U.S.C. 5174(c)) is further amended by striking paragraph
17 (2) and inserting the following:

18 “(2) *REPAIRS.*—

19 “(A) *FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE FOR RE-*
20 *PAIRS.*—The President may provide financial
21 assistance for the repair of owner-occupied pri-
22 vate residences, utilities, and residential infra-
23 structure (such as a private access route) dam-
24 aged by a major disaster, or with respect to indi-

1 *viduals with disabilities, rendered inaccessible by*
2 *a major disaster.*

3 “(B) *DIRECT ASSISTANCE FOR REPAIRS.*—

4 “(i) *IN GENERAL.*—*The President may*
5 *provide direct assistance to individuals and*
6 *households who are unable to make use of fi-*
7 *nancial assistance under subparagraph (A)*
8 *and when there is a lack of available re-*
9 *sources, for—*

10 “(I) *the repair of owner-occupied*
11 *private residences, utilities, and resi-*
12 *dential infrastructure (such as a pri-*
13 *vate access route) damaged by a major*
14 *disaster, or with respect to individuals*
15 *with disabilities, rendered inaccessible*
16 *by a disaster; and*

17 “(II) *eligible hazard mitigation*
18 *measures that reduce the likelihood and*
19 *future damage to such residences, utili-*
20 *ties, and infrastructure.*

21 “(ii) *ELIGIBILITY.*—*A recipient of as-*
22 *istance under this subparagraph shall not*
23 *be eligible for assistance under paragraph*
24 *(1), unless otherwise determined by the Ad-*
25 *ministrator.*

1 “(C) *RELATIONSHIP TO OTHER ASSIST-*
 2 *ANCE.—A recipient of assistance provided under*
 3 *this paragraph shall not be required to show that*
 4 *the assistance can be met through other means,*
 5 *except insurance proceeds.”.*

6 (b) *STATE- OR INDIAN TRIBAL GOVERNMENT-ADMINIS-*
 7 *TERED ASSISTANCE AND OTHER NEEDS ASSISTANCE.—*
 8 *Section 408(f) of the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and*
 9 *Emergency Assistance Act (42 U.S.C. 5174(f)) is amend-*
 10 *ed—*

11 (1) *by striking “subsections (c)(1)(B), (c)(4), and*
 12 *(e)” each place it appears and inserting “paragraphs*
 13 *(1)(B), (2)(B), and (4) of subsection (c) and sub-*
 14 *section (e)”;* and

15 (2) *in paragraph (3)(A) by striking “subsection*
 16 *(c)(1)(B), (c)(4), or (e)” and inserting “paragraph*
 17 *(1)(B), (2)(B), or (4) of subsection (c) or subsection*
 18 *(e)”.*

19 **SEC. 6. STATE-MANAGED HOUSING PILOT AUTHORITY.**

20 (a) *IN GENERAL.—Section 408 of the Robert T. Staf-*
 21 *ford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act (42*
 22 *U.S.C. 5174) is amended—*

23 (1) *in subsection (f)(3)—*

24 (A) *in subparagraph (A)—*

1 (i) by striking “A State” and inserting
2 the following:

3 “(i) *IN GENERAL.—A State*”; and

4 (ii) by adding at the end the following:

5 “(ii) *TRANSPARENCY.—The President*
6 *shall make public the criteria used to evalu-*
7 *ate applications under clause (i) and deter-*
8 *mine if a State or Indian tribal government*
9 *meets the criteria described in subpara-*
10 *graph (B) to administer grants described in*
11 *paragraph (1)(A).”;*

12 (B) in subparagraph (C)(ii)—

13 (i) in subclause (I) by striking “; and”
14 and inserting a semicolon;

15 (ii) in subclause (II) by striking the
16 period at the end and inserting a semicolon;
17 and

18 (iii) by adding at the end the fol-
19 lowing:

20 “(III) *outline the approach of the*
21 *State to help disaster survivors create*
22 *a permanent housing plan; and*

23 “(IV) *outline the approach of the*
24 *State to provide individual disaster*

1 survivors some choice of communities
2 and properties, as practicable.”;

3 (C) by striking subparagraph (F);

4 (D) by redesignating subparagraphs (G),
5 (H), (I), and (J) as subparagraphs (F), (G),
6 (H), and (I), respectively; and

7 (E) in subparagraph (I), as so redesign-
8 nated—

9 (i) in clause (ii) by striking “Not later
10 than 2 years after the date of enactment of
11 this paragraph, the” and inserting “The”;
12 and

13 (ii) in clause (iii) by striking “2
14 years” and inserting “10 years”; and

15 (2) in subsection (g)—

16 (A) in paragraph (1) by striking “para-
17 graph (2)” and inserting “paragraphs (2) and
18 (3)”;

19 (B) by adding at the end the following:

20 “(3) *DISASTER ASSISTANCE*.—In the case of as-
21 sistance provided under subsections (c)(1)(B),
22 (c)(2)(B), and (c)(4), the Federal share shall be not
23 less than 75 percent.”.

24 (b) *GAO ASSESSMENT*.—Upon the expiration of the
25 authority to carry out section 408(f) of the Robert T. Staf-

1 *ford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act (42*
2 *U.S.C. 5174(f)) as a pilot program, the Comptroller Gen-*
3 *eral of the United States shall issue a report on the effective-*
4 *ness, successes, and challenges of any pilot program carried*
5 *out pursuant to such section and make recommendations*
6 *on how to improve the provision of assistance under such*
7 *section.*

8 **SEC. 7. MANAGEMENT COSTS.**

9 *(a) IN GENERAL.—Section 324(b)(2) of the Robert T.*
10 *Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act (42*
11 *U.S.C. 5165b(b)(2)) is amended by adding at the end the*
12 *following:*

13 *“(C) INDIVIDUAL ASSISTANCE.—A grantee*
14 *under section 408(f) may be reimbursed not more*
15 *than 12 percent of the total award amount under*
16 *each such section.*

17 *“(D) CRISIS COUNSELING ASSISTANCE,*
18 *TRAINING, AND CASE MANAGEMENT SERVICES.—*
19 *A grantee and subgrantee, cumulatively, may be*
20 *reimbursed not more than 15 percent of the total*
21 *amount of the grant award under either section*
22 *416 or 426.”.*

23 *(b) ADMINISTRATIVE COSTS.—Section 408(f)(1) of the*
24 *Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assist-*

1 *ance Act (42 U.S.C. 5174), as amended by section 5(b) of*
2 *this Act, is amended—*

3 *(1) by striking “(A) GRANT TO STATE.—” and*
4 *all that follows through “subsection (g),” and insert-*
5 *ing “Subject to subsection (g),”; and*

6 *(2) by striking subparagraph (B).*

7 **SEC. 8. FUNDING FOR ONLINE GUIDES FOR POST-DISASTER**
8 **ASSISTANCE.**

9 *(a) USE OF SERVICES OF OTHER AGENCIES.—Section*
10 *201(a) of the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emer-*
11 *gency Assistance Act (42 U.S.C. 5131(a)) is amended—*

12 *(1) in paragraph (7), by striking the period at*
13 *the end and inserting “; and”; and*

14 *(2) by adding at the end the following:*

15 *“(8) post-disaster assistance.”.*

16 *(b) GRANTS FOR ONLINE GUIDES FOR ASSISTANCE.—*
17 *Section 201 of the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and*
18 *Emergency Assistance Act (42 U.S.C. 5131) is amended by*
19 *adding at the end the following:*

20 *“(e) FUNDING FOR ONLINE GUIDES FOR ASSIST-*
21 *ANCE.—*

22 *“(1) IN GENERAL.—The Administrator of the*
23 *Federal Emergency Management Agency may provide*
24 *funding to a State agency established under sub-*
25 *section (c) to establish, update, or operate a website*

1 *to provide information relating to post-disaster recov-*
2 *ery funding and resources to a community or an in-*
3 *dividual impacted by a major disaster or emergency.*

4 “(2) *MANAGEMENT.*—*A website created under*
5 *this subsection shall be—*

6 “(A) *managed by the State agency; and*

7 “(B) *suitable for the residents of the State*
8 *of the State agency.*

9 “(3) *CONTENT.*—*The Administrator may provide*
10 *funding to a State agency under this subsection to es-*
11 *tablish a website that contains only 1 or more of the*
12 *following:*

13 “(A) *A list of Federal, State, and local*
14 *sources of post-disaster recovery funding or as-*
15 *sistance that may be available to a community*
16 *after a major disaster or emergency.*

17 “(B) *A list of Federal, State, and local*
18 *sources of post-disaster recovery funding or as-*
19 *sistance that may be available to an individual*
20 *impacted by a major disaster or emergency.*

21 “(C) *A technical guide that lists and ex-*
22 *plains the costs and benefits of alternatives*
23 *available to a community to mitigate the im-*
24 *pacts of a major disaster or emergency and pre-*

1 *pare for sequential hazards such as flooding after*
2 *a wildfire.*

3 “(4) *COOPERATION.*—*A State agency that re-*
4 *ceives funding under this subsection shall cooperate*
5 *with the Secretary of the Interior, the Secretary of*
6 *Agriculture, the Secretary of Housing and Urban De-*
7 *velopment, the Administrator of the Small Business*
8 *Administration, and the Administrator of the Federal*
9 *Emergency Management Agency in developing a*
10 *website under this subsection.*

11 “(5) *UPDATES.*—*A State agency that receives*
12 *funding to establish a website under this subsection*
13 *shall update the website not less than once every 6*
14 *months.”.*

15 **SEC. 9. INDIVIDUAL ASSISTANCE DASHBOARD.**

16 *Title IV of the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and*
17 *Emergency Assistance Act (42 U.S.C. 5170 et seq.) is*
18 *amended by adding at the end the following:*

19 **“SEC. 431. INDIVIDUAL ASSISTANCE DASHBOARD.**

20 “(a) *IN GENERAL.*—*Not later than 90 days after a dec-*
21 *laration by the President that a major disaster exists under*
22 *section 401, the Administrator of the Federal Emergency*
23 *Management Agency shall publish on a website of the Agen-*
24 *cy an interactive web tool displaying the following informa-*
25 *tion with respect to such disaster:*

1 “(1) *The number of applications for assistance*
2 *under section 408, including a description of the*
3 *number of applications for assistance related to hous-*
4 *ing under such section and the number of applica-*
5 *tions for assistance to address other needs under sec-*
6 *tion 408(e).*

7 “(2) *The number of applications for such assist-*
8 *ance that are approved.*

9 “(3) *The number of applications for such assist-*
10 *ance that are denied.*

11 “(4) *A ranked list of the reasons for the denial*
12 *of such applications, including the number of appli-*
13 *cations for each reason for denial.*

14 “(5) *If available, the dollar amount of assistance*
15 *provided pursuant to section 408 to applicants who*
16 *are—*

17 “(A) *property owners with a household an-*
18 *nuual income—*

19 “(i) *above the national median house-*
20 *hold income; and*

21 “(ii) *below the national median house-*
22 *hold income; and*

23 “(B) *renters with a household annual in-*
24 *come—*

1 “(i) above the national median house-
2 hold income; and

3 “(ii) below the national median house-
4 hold income.

5 “(6) The estimated percentage of residential
6 property that was destroyed as a result of the major
7 disaster, if available.

8 “(7) Any other information that the Adminis-
9 trator determines to be relevant.

10 “(b) *PERSONALLY IDENTIFIABLE INFORMATION.*—The
11 Administrator shall ensure that none of the information
12 published under subsection (a) contains the personally iden-
13 tifiable information of an applicant.”.

14 **SEC. 10. FEMA REPORTS.**

15 (a) *IN GENERAL.*—Not later than 180 days after the
16 date of enactment of this Act, the Administrator of the Fed-
17 eral Emergency Management Agency shall submit to the
18 Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure of the
19 House of Representatives and the Committee on Homeland
20 Security and Government Affairs of the Senate a report
21 with respect to fiscal year 2016 through the most recent fis-
22 cal year ending before the date of enactment of this Act,
23 and an annual report for any fiscal year beginning on or
24 after the date of enactment of this Act, describing—

1 (1) *the average amount of individual assistance*
2 *and individual and household assistance provided*
3 *under section 408 of the Robert T. Stafford Disaster*
4 *Relief and Emergency Assistance Act (42 U.S.C. 5121*
5 *et seq.) to, and the rate of denial of individual assist-*
6 *ance and individual and household assistance pro-*
7 *vided under such section for—*

8 (A) *all individuals;*

9 (B) *households;*

10 (C) *individuals and households with a re-*
11 *ported annual income under 75 percent of the*
12 *national median household income;*

13 (D) *individuals with a reported annual in-*
14 *come over 125 percent of the national median*
15 *household income; and*

16 (E) *individuals with a reported annual in-*
17 *come between 75 percent and 125 percent of the*
18 *national median household income; and*

19 (2) *an explanation for any factors causing an*
20 *increase in the rate of denial of the assistance de-*
21 *scribed in paragraph (1), if applicable.*

22 (b) *INFORMATION REQUIRED.—In the report sub-*
23 *mitted under subsection (a), the Administrator shall de-*
24 *scribe the number of homeowners and the number of renters*

1 *for each category of individuals and households described*
2 *in subparagraphs (C) through (E) of subsection (a)(1).*

3 **SEC. 11. SHELTERING OF EMERGENCY RESPONSE PER-**
4 **SONNEL.**

5 *Section 403 of the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief*
6 *and Emergency Assistance Act (42 U.S.C. 5170b) is amend-*
7 *ed by adding at the end the following:*

8 *“(e) SHELTERING OF EMERGENCY RESPONSE PER-*
9 *SONNEL.—*

10 *“(1) IN GENERAL.—For any major disaster for*
11 *which the President has authorized emergency protec-*
12 *tive measures for an area within the jurisdiction of*
13 *a State, tribal, or local government, the Adminis-*
14 *trator may reimburse the State, tribal, or local gov-*
15 *ernment for costs relating to sheltering emergency re-*
16 *sponse personnel, including individuals that are a*
17 *part of the same predisaster household as such per-*
18 *sonnel, in exclusive-use congregate or non-congregate*
19 *settings if the Governor of the State or chief executive*
20 *of the tribal or local government determines that the*
21 *damage or disruption to such area is of such a mag-*
22 *nitude as to disrupt the provision of emergency pro-*
23 *TECTIVE MEASURES WITHIN SUCH AREA.*

24 *“(2) LIMITATION OF ASSISTANCE.—*

1 “(A) *IN GENERAL.*—*The Administrator*
2 *may only reimburse a State, tribal, or local gov-*
3 *ernment for the costs of sheltering emergency re-*
4 *sponse personnel under paragraph (1) for such a*
5 *period of time as the Administrator determines*
6 *reasonable based in the individual characteristics*
7 *of and impacts to the affected area, including the*
8 *extent of damage, the availability of alternative*
9 *housing options, the availability of utilities, and*
10 *disruptions to transportation infrastructure.*

11 “(B) *MAXIMUM DURATION OF REIMBURSE-*
12 *MENT.*—*The period of reimbursement under sub-*
13 *paragraph (A) may not exceed the 6-month pe-*
14 *riod beginning on the date on which the incident*
15 *period ends.*

16 “(3) *DEFINITION.*—*In this subsection, the term*
17 *‘emergency response personnel’ means—*

18 “(A) *employees or contracted employees pro-*
19 *viding law enforcement, fire suppression, rescue,*
20 *emergency medical, emergency management, or*
21 *emergency communications services; and*

22 “(B) *elected officials, except members of*
23 *Congress, responsible for the overseeing or direct-*
24 *ing emergency response operations or recovery*
25 *activities.”.*

1 **SEC. 12. IMPROVED RENTAL ASSISTANCE.**

2 (a) *IN GENERAL.*—Section 408(c)(1)(A)(ii) of the Rob-
3 *ert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance*
4 *Act (42 U.S.C. 5174(c)(1)(A)(ii)) is amended by inserting*
5 *“, including local post-disaster rent increases,” after “ac-*
6 *commodation provided”.*

7 (b) *STUDY.*—Not later than 1 year after the date of
8 *enactment of this Act, the Administrator of the Federal*
9 *Emergency Management Agency shall conduct a study to*
10 *examine the unique challenges of renters when seeking Fed-*
11 *eral disaster assistance and any disparities of assistance*
12 *provided to homeowners and renters pursuant to section*
13 *408 of the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emer-*
14 *gency Assistance Act (42 U.S.C. 5174) and develop a plan*
15 *that addresses any identified challenges and disparities, in-*
16 *cluding any recommendations for legislative action.*

17 (c) *REPORT TO CONGRESS.*—Upon completion of the
18 *activities carried out under subsection (b), the Adminis-*
19 *trator shall submit to the Committee on Transportation and*
20 *Infrastructure of the House of Representatives and the Com-*
21 *mittee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs of*
22 *the Senate a report containing the study and recommenda-*
23 *tions required under subsection (b).*

24 (d) *CONSULTATION.*—In completing the study and re-
25 *port required under subsections (b) and (c), the Adminis-*

1 *trator shall consult with appropriate Federal entities and*
2 *stakeholders involved in disaster housing.*

3 **SEC. 13. GAO REPORT ON PRELIMINARY DAMAGE ASSESS-**
4 **MENTS.**

5 *(a) IN GENERAL.—The Comptroller General of the*
6 *United States shall conduct a study on the practices, in-*
7 *cluding the accuracy of such practices, that the Federal*
8 *Emergency Management Agency uses when conducting pre-*
9 *liminary damage assessments for the purposes of providing*
10 *assistance under section 408 of the Robert T. Stafford Dis-*
11 *aster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act (42. U.S.C.*
12 *5174).*

13 *(b) CONTENTS.—The Comptroller General shall in-*
14 *clude in the study conducted under subsection (a) the fol-*
15 *lowing:*

16 *(1) A comparison of the process and procedures*
17 *used by the Federal Emergency Management Agency*
18 *to complete preliminary damage assessments to the*
19 *process and procedures used by private insurance*
20 *companies following a major disaster.*

21 *(2) A review of training provided to individuals*
22 *conducting preliminary damage assessments.*

23 *(3) A comparison of damage estimates for homes*
24 *owned by individuals above the national median in-*

1 *come to homes owned by individuals at or below the*
2 *national median income.*

3 **SEC. 14. APPLICABILITY.**

4 *The amendments made by sections 4, 5, 7, 8, and 11*
5 *shall only apply to amounts appropriated on or after the*
6 *date of enactment of this Act.*

7 **SEC. 15. GAO REPORT TO CONGRESS ON CHALLENGES**
8 **UNDER PUBLIC ASSISTANCE ALTERNATIVE**
9 **PROCEDURES.**

10 *(a) IN GENERAL.—The Comptroller General of the*
11 *United States shall conduct a study on the challenges to*
12 *States and Territories of the United States in obtaining as-*
13 *sistance under section 428 of the Robert T. Stafford Disaster*
14 *Relief and Emergency Assistance Act (42 U.S.C. 5189f).*

15 *(b) CONTENTS.—In conducting the study described in*
16 *subsection (a), the Comptroller General shall study the chal-*
17 *lenges for assistance described in subsection (a) faced by the*
18 *following:*

19 *(1) Rural areas, as such term is defined in sec-*
20 *tion 423 of the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and*
21 *Emergency Assistance Act (42 U.S.C. 5189a).*

22 *(2) Small impoverished communities, as such*
23 *term is defined in section 203 of such Act.*

24 *(3) Other communities, areas, or individuals*
25 *that the Comptroller General determines pertinent.*

1 (c) *REPORT TO CONGRESS.*—*Not later than 1 year*
2 *after the date of enactment of this Act, the Comptroller Gen-*
3 *eral shall submit to Congress a report describing the results*
4 *of the study required under subsection (a).*

Union Calendar No. 319

118TH CONGRESS
2^D SESSION

H. R. 1796

[Report No. 118-390, Part I]

A BILL

To improve individual assistance provided by the Federal Emergency Management Agency, and for other purposes.

FEBRUARY 14, 2024

Reported from the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure with an amendment

FEBRUARY 14, 2024

Committees on Financial Services and Small Business discharged; committed to the Committee of the Whole House on the State of the Union and ordered to be printed