AGN. NO. _____

MOTION BY SUPERVISOR LINDSEY P. HORVATH November 10, 2026

Legal Recourse to Access Blocked Palisades and Eaton Fire Recovery Funds

The Palisades and Eaton Fires were the worst disaster events to impact Los Angeles County, and amongst the most devastating and costly disasters in American history. In January 2025, President Biden issued a Major Disaster Declaration in response to the fires, making federal resources available to support our emergency response and recovery, including reimbursement of eligible costs incurred by State and local governments. The County has prioritized its resources to help communities recover more resiliently, expecting to recover some of those funds to ensure that normal county services across all five supervisorial districts will not be inhibited.

Los Angeles County applied for funding for roughly 190 projects through the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Public Assistance Program, seeking reimbursement of more than $455 million in disaster-related costs. To date, less than $1.4 million has been released. Twenty-two months after the fires, the majority of these projects remain “pending obligation”, meaning they have cleared FEMA's initial technical and oversight reviews, and are awaiting final obligation of federal funds to the State, which would allow the County to recover costs for completed work.

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Additionally, the County has applied for approximately $347 million in funding through the Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP) for projects to make communities safer from future disasters. These requests include projects such as fire hardening of homes and public facilities, undergrounding of power lines, and upgrading water system capacity and resiliency. Yet, to date, no HMGP funding has been awarded to the County for this disaster. In the case of both FEMA Public Assistance and Hazard Mitigation Grants, funds have been appropriated by Congress and are available to the County based on formula allocations, pending the Administration's approval.

The State of California is the lead applicant for these FEMA funds and has been a stalwart partner in advocating for our community's recovery. In 2025, the Legislature passed and the Governor signed AB100, which authorized the Department of Finance to provide financial assistance to Los Angeles County for unmet response and recovery needs as we await federal assistance. To date, the State has advanced $217 million. However, in a cruel irony, federal rules stipulate that projects are ineligible for FEMA grants if projects begin construction before FEMA approval, meaning that projects that have received a commitment for AB100 awards often cannot use those funds without forfeiting a FEMA grant. At a time when federal budget cuts, particularly for healthcare and social services, have already crippled Los Angeles County's budget, these promised federal grants are essential.

These are not the only broken promises made to our recovering fire communities. FEMA initially approved $13 million for the Disaster Case Management Program at least through 2027; however, they have only disbursed approximately $3 million, leaving roughly $10 million in approved unpaid funding. Recently, FEMA announced a partial

payment of the unpaid funds but have declined additional funding to extend these programs beyond October 2026. Historically, Congress has authorized Community Development Block Grant Disaster Recovery (CDBG-DR) funding to support long-term recovery within a year after a major disaster. The 21st Century ROAD to Housing Act authorized the CDBG-DR program for three years, but Congress has not yet instructed the Department of Housing and Urban Development to advance an allocation. CDBG-DR provides a much larger and more flexible source of funding and can support homeowners struggling to afford their rebuilds, but the Federal Administration and Congress have failed to advance this essential funding.

Los Angeles County, the State of California, our congressional delegation, and community leaders have all appealed to the White House, the Department of Homeland Security, and FEMA to release this funding and allow our community recovery to move forward. It has been widely reported in the media that the Trump Administration has refused to release disaster aid to "Democrat" states including California, Illinois, Minnesota, and Washington, while obligating billions of dollars in disaster funding for jurisdictions in other states. FEMA data from disasters in 2024 and 2025 underscore this point. $2.5 billion has been obligated to North Carolina, $1.6 billion to Georgia, $1.6 billion to Florida, $637 million to Tennessee, $556 million to South Carolina, and $520 million to Texas – in fact hardly any funding has been allocated to any state that voted for Kamala Harris in the 2024 presidential election.

In the past year, courts have upheld challenges from states regarding unreasonable and politically motivated changes to emergency management programs. In *Illinois v. Noem*, a federal court ruled that the Department of Homeland Security must

reverse unfavorable changes to program grant eligibility inconsistent with disaster recovery and resilience. Earlier this year, Attorney General Rob Bonta co-led a coalition of 24 attorneys general to successfully challenge the Trump Administration for imposing politically motivated conditions on billions of dollars on federal grants that help states and local governments prepare for, protect against, respond to, and recover from catastrophic disasters.

Supporting communities responding to and recovering from a natural disaster has historically transcended politics; however, the Trump Administration has proven that it prioritizes political retribution above community wellbeing and public safety. Normal administrative and procedural recourses have been unsuccessful, and it is time to evaluate additional actions necessary to unlock these funds that have been promised to, and withheld, from our communities.

I, THEREFORE, MOVE that the Board of Supervisors direct County Counsel and the Chief Executive Officer to report back to the Board in closed session on November 17, 2026, regarding the state of pending federal funding for wildfire recovery and potential legal recourse for the County to access these funds owed to Los Angeles County and its fire survivors.

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