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United States Senate
COMMITTEE ON COMMERCE, SCIENCE,
AND TRANSPORTATION
WASHINGTON, DC 20510-6125
WEBSITE: <https://commerce.senate.gov>

December 9, 2025

The Honorable Ted Cruz
United States Senate
167 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Cruz,

Extreme weather events are becoming more frequent and more destructive. The catastrophic floods in Texas earlier this year that killed at least 135 people, including 27 at Camp Mystic, are a devastating example. The events in Kerrville, Palisades, Asheville, Lahaina, and too many other natural disasters have shown us that providing Americans with more timely and accurate weather information can avoid billions in property losses and save lives. In the State of Washington, we are also seeing more intense rain and flooding, and this week atmospheric rivers are forecasted to bring ten consecutive days of rain to Seattle with potentially widespread, significant river flooding.

As Chair and Ranking Member of the U.S. Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation with jurisdiction over the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) and its National Weather Service (NWS), we oversee the Agency's weather readiness efforts to safeguard our communities. That includes making sure that NOAA and NWS have the right people with the right expertise on staff, those staff are in the right locations to provide regional and local assistance, and they are creating and procuring the most cutting-edge technology to consistently improve our weather data collection and prediction. You and I have worked on bipartisan legislation to address some of these issues like the NOAA Weather Radio Modernization Act that would upgrade and expand the nation's weather communication and radio system, and the Weather Act Reauthorization Act that would enhance weather forecasting and innovation, strengthen emergency preparedness with improved communication, modernize critical research programs, and support farmers with better tools for water management.

It is in that spirit that I write to request an oversight hearing focused on the National Weather Service's ongoing weather readiness challenges and its progress towards rebuilding its workforce. For example, the Presidential Memorandum signed on July 7, 2025, provided a public safety exemption to the federal hiring freeze at NWS. The Office of Personnel Management granted NWS permission to hire 450 mission critical positions including

meteorologists, hydrologists, and electronic technicians to help fill the 550 staff vacancies created just this year. We have not received information on NWS's progress toward filling those positions, locations where the addition of staff has allowed NWS to end extraordinary measures including overnight closures and canceled weather balloon launches, and any bottlenecks NWS may be facing in recruitment, clearance, or training. The Committee should also hear from NOAA and NWS on the science, technology, and infrastructure needed, as well as data assimilation and management necessary to improve forecasts and modernize warning technologies. The American public depends on NWS's ability to deliver accurate, timely forecasts and warnings, especially as extreme storms, fires, and hurricanes become more frequent and severe.

I thank you in advance for your consideration of this hearing, and I stand ready to work with you to ensure NOAA, and its NWS, has the resources and workforce it needs to fulfill its vital mission.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Maria Cantwell". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "M" and a stylized "C" for "Cantwell".

Maria Cantwell
Ranking Member