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United States Senate

COMMITTEE ON COMMERCE, SCIENCE,  
AND TRANSPORTATION

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-6125

WEBSITE: <https://commerce.senate.gov>

November 19, 2025

Dr. Neil Jacobs  
Under Secretary of Commerce for Oceans and Atmosphere  
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration  
1401 Constitution Avenue NW  
Washington, DC 20230

Dear Dr. Jacobs,

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's ("NOAA") decision to cancel grant funding for real-time data from the Alaska Earthquake Center ("AEC") and operations at nine NOAA-run seismic stations undermines the efficacy and timeliness of NOAA's Tsunami Warning Centers' warnings and alerts and puts coastal communities at unnecessary risk. NOAA must work to restore the seismic information needed for tsunami alerts in Alaska and develop a concrete plan to protect this data in other critical locations from going offline or being delayed. On Washington's coast, a tsunami generated by the Cascadia Subduction Zone could hit communities in 15-30 minutes. Any potential delays in life saving information puts our communities at risk.

With more than 25 years of seismic monitoring, the AEC is an important partner in NOAA's delivery of timely and accurate tsunami warnings for Washington, Alaska, Hawai'i, and the entire West Coast. NOAA informed AEC that it would discontinue funding for the grant in fiscal year 2023 because of budgetary constraints at the National Weather Service; although it appears that NOAA continued receiving real-time seismic data until recently. However, after being notified that the approximately \$300,000 grant would again not be renewed in fiscal year 2026, the AEC elected to cease providing real-time seismic data critical to tsunami warnings and alerts.

Without this funding, nine NOAA-run stations in Alaska that monitor tsunami-triggering earthquakes will go offline by the end of the month. And while it is our understanding that NOAA will continue to receive seismic data from the AEC's additional 250 stations through alternative pathways, the delivery will be delayed. I authored the law that requires NOAA to work with the U.S. Geological Survey and the National Science Foundation to provide "rapid and reliable seismic information" to the NOAA Tsunami forecasting and warning program, because this data is so critical (33 U.S.C. §3203 (b)(7)). Seconds matter during a tsunami, and coastal communities can have as little as 20 minutes to evacuate and prepare for an incoming

wave. According to NOAA, in areas of high seismic network density the Tsunami Warning Centers can determine within five minutes of an earthquake whether to issue an alert, and any delay in the data could erode critical time to get people out of harm's way.

It is imperative that NOAA ensures the continued integrity of our nation's tsunami preparedness and public safety infrastructure. I am deeply concerned about the risks posed by the cancellation of this grant program. I urge NOAA to immediately restore funding to the AEC and nine seismic stations and to work with AEC and other seismic data providers to ensure that data is delivered to NOAA in real time to improve forecasts and protect the life and safety of our coastal communities.

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 long, sweeping underline.

Maria Cantwell  
Ranking Member