

United States Senate

February 14, 2022

President Joseph Biden
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear President Biden,

As the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) quickly approaches its April 1, 2022 target to fully implement Risk Rating (RR) 2.0, I urgently request that you delay its implementation. As I have previously expressed, along with several other Members of Congress in both parties, RR 2.0 unfairly increases flood insurance rates for millions of Americans, making the coverage virtually unaffordable for them to keep. Your administration must take action now to ensure the program remains solvent for vulnerable Americans across the country.

As you know, many Americans' greatest investment is their home. The creation of the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) centered around providing affordable flood insurance coverage when the private insurance market deemed coverage too risky. Although RR 2.0's purpose is to address the sustainability of the NFIP, the program is only effective if families that depend on the program can afford its premiums. Despite the concern many stakeholders and Members of Congress have voiced, FEMA has continued to rollout RR 2.0, implementing Phase I of rate hikes to new policies. Phase I is just the tip of the iceberg.

During RR 2.0's Phase I, one of my constituents in Terrytown, La. saw the premium almost quadruple when it rose from \$537 to \$1,936. The average home value in Terrytown is \$162,700, and the median household income there is \$46,638. Another homeowner living in Waggaman, La. experienced a premium increase from \$564 to \$2,490. The average home value in Waggaman is \$112,800, and the median household income is \$46,075. A family in Gibson, La. experienced a premium increase from \$600 to \$5,100 during Phase I of RR 2.0. The average home value in Gibson is \$150,200, and the median household income is \$48,773. Nearly 80% of the more than 5 million American families and businesses that the NFIP covers will see an increase in their premiums because of RR 2.0. RR 2.0 isn't effective if it is not sustainable. It's clear the program is on a path to unaffordability.

Not only that, but FEMA is implementing RR 2.0 unilaterally—without consulting Congress. These changes amount to the biggest change to how the NFIP calculates premiums since its inception in 1968. FEMA branded these changes as “equitable,” but they hurt hardworking, low- and middle-income Americans the most by threatening to devalue their most important asset—their home. It's unthinkable that FEMA seems to be taking deliberate action to make flood insurance less affordable in the wake of the devastating hurricanes that have recently ravaged coastal states like Louisiana.

Alongside many of my Senate colleagues, I have worked diligently and in a bipartisan manner to propose reforms to the NFIP program. Without proper Congressional oversight, FEMA's sweeping change in the program is putting millions of Americans in danger of losing their homes and businesses. In light of this, I am asking you to halt FEMA's effort to fully implement RR 2.0. As president, you have the authority to rein in FEMA's end-run around Congress, and I urge you to do that in order to protect the vulnerable homes and businesses that belong to millions of Americans.

Sincerely,



John Kennedy
United States Senator