COUNTY OF EL DORADO
Board of Supervisors

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GEORGE TURNBOO
SUPERVISOR, DISTRICT II

January 14, 2025

The Honorable Donald J. Trump
45th President of the United States

Dear President Donald J. Trump,

Please help the victims of the 2021 Caldor Fire who were forgotten by the Biden Administration immediately following promises to provide FEMA Individual Assistance. As the chair of the El Dorado County Board of Supervisors, I am still working with residents of Grizzly Flats, California, to help them continue to rebuild their lives after losing everything. A number of residents are still homeless because failed insurance and wildfire policies have caused them to now own charred properties only. Please help the survivors of the Caldor Fire by issuing FEMA Individual Assistance as President, which we are aware that you have been gracious enough to do with past California wildfires.

Grizzly Flats, California, was founded around 1850 as a mining and logging town. One of the more commonly known lumber-based businesses that originated near Grizzly Flats was the California Door Co, which began in the area known as Caldor. Decades later, when government policies shut down mining and logging industry, Grizzly Flats changed into a humble community of nature loving Americans seeking a rural lifestyle. Residents that remained and moved to Grizzly Flats were generally Veterans, seniors on fixed incomes, young families and people seeking an affordable way to reconnect with nature. Government policies promoted forest growth without significant management spurred on by environmental groups with dogmatic views of forest management. The US Forest Service (USFS) identified a dangerous fire hazard area near Grizzly Flats as the Trestle Project that studies showed would lead to wildfire disaster if left untreated or unmanaged and could cause a complete loss of Grizzly Flats. While the community members of Grizzly Flats Fire Safe Council worked hard to clean up the community perimeter, they were restricted from accessing USFS lands, which were left untreated and unmanaged by USFS.

When the Caldor Fire initially erupted in August of 2021 in the area of the Trestle Project, the US Forest Service delayed the response to the fire, and even called off response when it was being enacted. A few days went by before proper response took action and by that time the Caldor Fire had grown into a catastrophic wildfire. Eventually, the Caldor Fire would completely destroy Grizzly Flats, California, and then move eastward toward South Lake Tahoe, California, to burn 221,835 acres of the Eldorado National Forest with $1.2 billion estimated in damages as it progressed. When Joe Biden and Gavin Newsom visited with Caldor Fire response crews, they made it apparent that they felt it was a “federal issue” and promised FEMA assistance to those impacted. Once the residents returned to begin the clean-up effort, FEMA began to deny and delay assistance, even with letters of support from Gavin Newsom, Senators, Congressman and

State and Local leaders representing El Dorado County. Locals began to believe that their votes for Trump in 2020 and signing the recall petition for Gavin Newsom, had led to a political segregation similar to what North Carolina experienced in the wake of Hurricane Helene. Government regulations and policies have led to the demise of Grizzly Flats, California. When the industries left the area, the reason for living in the area changed to enjoying a rural lifestyle. The mismanagement of forest lands surrounding Grizzly Flats, such as the Trestle Project, have led to further government regulations regarding wildfire. In response to a perceived increase in hazards necessitating increased government regulations, the insurance industry has been increasing insurance costs and requirements. The fire insurance costs and requirements have skyrocketed beyond the means of most residents in Grizzly Flats, California. Many residents were either uninsured or underinsured as a result. Once the Caldor Fire had reached catastrophic size and entered Grizzly Flats, the residents lost everything as they had to evacuate in a panic. The residents had believed that the wildfire would be put out before it reached them and there were few warnings from USFS concerning the fire on their land. Caldor Fire survivors share stories of evacuating as their homes were engulfed in flames and escaping with only the clothes on their back. Later when survivors sought to question the Biden Administration and USFS response to the Caldor Fire, they found there were roadblocks preventing them from having the ability to get answers in a court of law. We need serious policy changes, like removing the USFS "Let It Burn" policy, by the federal agencies that manage forests and industries, including the ability to take legal action against environmental groups that stop forest management projects and to bring back logging to El Dorado County while stopping the importing of lumber from other countries so local lumber industries can thrive again here, and across America.

As the El Dorado County District 2 Supervisor representing the survivors of the Caldor Fire, I would like to invite you to tour Grizzly Flats, California to meet the residents still living there in RVs and trailers hoping to rebuild and see the devastation that remains. I would also like a full investigation of the Biden administration response to the Caldor Fire and subsequent denial of FEMA Individual Assistance. We may share a distant ancestor Ethel Alfreda Trump, which speaks to my connection with El Dorado County, as my ancestry first arrived in 1838 and has remained. The Caldor Fire survivors still need the FEMA Individual Assistance they were promised. Please help the community of Grizzly Flats in any way possible as they continue to rebuild their lives after losing all in the 2021 Caldor Fire. Learn more about the 2021 Caldor Fire by watching the 60 Minutes documentary on YouTube linked below:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HEjWfLPpQwY

Sincerely,

George Turnboo
District 2 Supervisor
County of El Dorado