

September 9, 2020

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The Honorable Brian Schatz
United States Senate
722 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Schatz:

I am writing to thank you for your leadership and to add the support of the American Society of Civil Engineers (ASCE) for your proposal to create a National Disaster Safety Board (NDSB). ASCE is well placed to assist you and your colleagues in Congress in developing this proposal.

Founded in 1852, ASCE is the country's oldest civil engineering organization. Representing more than 150,000 civil engineers from private practice, government, industry, and academia, ASCE is dedicated to the advancement of the science and practice of engineering. ASCE members represent the profession that plans, designs, and builds much of the nation's infrastructure.

To achieve a goal of obtaining and maintaining a state-of-good-repair for all infrastructure at the lowest life-cycle cost, designers and planners are encouraged to incorporate system resilience - the ability of a project or system to withstand and recover to full operability from extreme events quickly and efficiently - into the decision-making process. The increasing frequency and intensity of natural disasters as well as deliberate destructive events, combined with increasing population densities, reliance on technology, and system interdependencies, have demonstrated vulnerabilities in the nation's infrastructure. An important component of resilience is understanding the causes of failure and incorporating this knowledge into design and construction of new infrastructure as well as the retrofit of existing structures.

More than eleven years ago, ASCE developed the *ASCE Post-Disaster Assessment Manual* that outlines policies and procedures for conducting engineering assessments in the wake of natural and human-caused disasters. ASCE's purpose in doing such assessments is twofold. First, the behavior of engineered facilities that have been exposed to extreme forces must be evaluated so that engineers may learn from the disaster. Then, and perhaps more importantly, those lessons learned must be documented to inform the future actions of both the profession and society.

The best way for the results of post-disaster studies, as well as all advances in materials and engineering understanding, to make their way into general practice, is for the findings to be incorporated into standards and building codes. ASCE engages in the standards setting process on a large scale. ASCE Standards provide technical

guidelines for promoting safety, reliability, productivity, and efficiency in civil engineering. Many of our standards are referenced by model building codes and adopted by state and local jurisdiction. They also provide guidance for design projects around the world as community leaders look to build more resiliently.

Accredited by the American National Standards Institute (ANSI), ASCE has a rigorous and formal process overseen by the Codes and Standards Committee (CSC). Standards are created or updated by a balanced, volunteer standards committee, followed by a public review period. Such standards as ASCE 7: Minimum Design Loads and Associated Criteria for Buildings and Other Structures and ASCE 24: Flood Resistant Design and Construction Standards into building and design are the backbone of most of the nation's building codes.

Thank you for your leadership in working to ensure a modern, resilient infrastructure by seeking ways to broaden our knowledge of the causes of failures. We urge you along with your Senate colleagues to pass bipartisan legislation that will help protect the health, safety, and welfare of the American public. ASCE believes that the proposed National Disaster Safety Board could be an efficient and cost-effective way to achieve that goal.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "J. Briaud". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "J" and "B".

Jean-Louis Briaud, Ph.D., P.E., D.GE, Dist.M.ASCE
ASCE President 2021