



RICARDO LARA
CALIFORNIA INSURANCE COMMISSIONER

February 19, 2025

The Honorable Kathryn Barger, Chair of the Board
The Honorable Lindsey P. Horvath, Supervisor, Third District
Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors
Kenneth Hahn Hall of Administration
500 West Temple Street
Los Angeles, CA 90012

Dear Chair Barger and Supervisor Horvath:

Thank you for your letter of January 29th expressing your concerns and desire to continue to partner with me in assisting survivors of the 2025 Los Angeles County wildfires given the unprecedented task of rebuilding homes, businesses, and communities.

I share your goal of doing everything possible to assist survivors to recover as quickly as possible. As Insurance Commissioner, my primary focus is making sure our wildfire survivors get the insurance benefits they are entitled to, and they get them as soon as possible. I'm committed to get people answers, to get people action, and to get people on the path to being paid the benefits that are rightly theirs.

As these wildfires commenced, I immediately mobilized my disaster response teams which included my Department's insurance experts, enforcement officers, and community outreach team to be available to the Board and other public officials for community meetings and other consumer assistance events. I also extended my Department's Hotline hours to evenings and weekends dedicated to wildfire survivors, where they can speak to a real person who can answer their questions. I further dispatched my Department's Enforcement Team to safeguard consumers from fraudsters and help with evacuation efforts and created an insurance fraud strike team with the Los Angeles County District Attorney's office to prosecute fraudsters, protect consumers from exploitation, and educate wildfire survivors about their rights.

My insurance experts have staffed the Disaster Recovery Centers since their onset, where we have met with more than 2,000 survivors so far. I also held two insurance support workshops in Santa Monica and Pasadena over two entire weekends last month where my insurance experts met with more than 1,000 policyholders answering their questions and also putting them in touch with their insurance company, who I required to be on site. Many of these survivors left with advance payments for additional living expenses and other coverages. This does not include the more than 1,000 survivors we assisted on our consumer hotline. I am holding two more insurance support workshops on March 8th in Los Angeles and March 15th in Pasadena; more information can be seen [here](#).

My January 30th virtual townhall was a success. More than 2,500 individuals attended, with another 2,000 views on Facebook. We provided helpful information on policyholder rights and protections that exist regarding their insurance coverages, answered several questions, and provided my commitment for the Department to be available through this long recovery process.

A few other notable actions that I've taken since the January 7th wildfires started include:

- On January 9th, I issued a mandatory one-year moratorium on insurance non-renewals and cancellations under an existing law that I wrote back in 2018 when a member of the California State Senate. My [Bulletin](#) protects those within the perimeters and adjoining ZIP Codes of the Palisades and Eaton fires, among other fires, in Los Angeles County for one year from the Governor's January 7th emergency declaration regardless of whether they suffered a loss. On this same date, I also issued a [Notice](#) calling on all admitted and non-admitted property insurance companies to forego any pending nonrenewals and cancellations that were due to take effect on residential properties located within and around these wildfires and which did not fall within the statutory protections of the formal moratorium.
- On January 23rd, I issued a [Bulletin](#) to all California insurance companies to remind them of several laws that I strongly supported -- if not sponsored -- following the 2018 wildfires, where policyholders who suffered a total loss in the Southern California wildfire emergency are entitled to advance payments on their claims. Many people have already received these upfront payments for personal contents and additional living expenses, with some companies paying more than the law requires. However, we are monitoring the insurance industry to ensure that all survivors due these advance payments receive them.
- Once the Los Angeles County Debris Removal Program was announced, I immediately issued a [Consumer Alert](#) and [Notice](#) detailing how the program will interact with insurance — a benefit available to all eligible property owners who choose to participate in the 2025 Los Angeles Wildfires Debris Removal Program.
- On January 30th, I [announced](#) the creation of a [public consumer claims tracking system](#) designed to provide essential data for consumers and the public, revealing since that more than \$6.9 billion in claims have been paid out to wildfire survivors due to advance payment laws that I championed after previous wildfire catastrophes. Insurance company payouts are immediately helping people find housing and replace personal items. The amounts will grow as people begin the claims process, which includes the rebuilding of homes and other structures.
- On February 6th, to facilitate further recovery from these devastating losses, I issued a [Notice](#) calling on all residential property insurance companies to provide policyholders, who suffered a total loss, up to 100%, but no less than 75%, of Contents (Personal Property) coverage limits without requiring them to undertake the onerous task of completing a detailed personal property inventory.

With regard to the specific issue you raised in your letter of survivors feeling pressured to return to their homes despite concerns about ongoing hazardous conditions in the area and habitability, I've been hearing similar concerns from the community. A related issue arose after the Camp Fire in Paradise in 2018 where power, water, and sewer services were down which rendered many homes uninhabitable. As a result of those concerns, I sponsored SB 872 (Dodd, Chapter 261, Statutes of 2020) that expanded Additional Living Expenses (ALE) to situations where a home is uninhabitable even where the home suffered little or no damage. Where water and power services are down, it is clear that a home is not habitable and so this existing law requires an insurance company to provide ALE until the

home is made habitable. In addition, a residence may be deemed uninhabitable due to health and safety reasons.

I appreciate you putting me in touch with your County's Department of Public Health. My team met with Dr. Barbara Ferrer and her staff and, as a result of that meeting and their February 11th [Public Health Advisory](#), I issued a [Notice](#) on February 14th to all insurance companies that set forth my expectations when it comes to continuing Additional Living Expense benefits to residents where a home may be uninhabitable due to health and safety reasons.

With regard to survivors not getting call backs from their insurance adjusters, and other delays, I would encourage anyone in that position to directly contact my Department. My team will contact their insurance company and work to put their claims back on track.

With regard to the ability of survivors to obtain renter's insurance for their temporary apartments and homes, I understand that some insurance companies paused writing new insurance policies in areas around Los Angeles County while the fires were not yet contained. These pauses typically last about 30 days. We can expect insurance companies to again start selling renters' insurance policies in the near future. However, in the meantime, please note that the FAIR Plan is not permitted to pause writing insurance, so survivors should be able to obtain a basic renters' insurance policy from the FAIR Plan if they cannot obtain one from the traditional market. The FAIR Plan's renter's policy will cover the tenant's personal property.

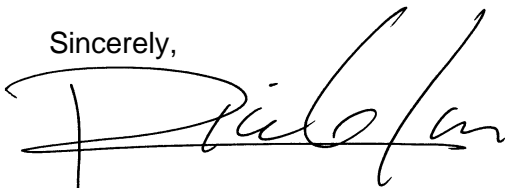
With regard to the other issues raised in your letter that involve availability and affordability of insurance now and in the future, as you may be aware, my team and I have been working on my [Sustainable Insurance Strategy](#), which will make our state's insurance market more predictable, stable, and competitive, thereby increasing the availability of insurance policies across the state. Achieving affordability will take time, but we've taken the necessary big steps to get there. Stability and availability are the cornerstones of a sustainable and affordable insurance market, and we are moving in that direction.

If any of your constituents have questions on their wildfire claim, please refer them to my Department. We have put together a robust [Wildfire Resources](#) page and several [Consumer Alerts](#) that provide helpful information for survivors. They may also speak with us by calling our toll-free Hotline at (800) 927-4357 or visiting us online at www.insurance.ca.gov.

Please continue to keep me and my office informed of additional issues that you hear on the ground so that we can help address them, including dispelling any misinformation out there.

Thank you for your continued leadership and partnership. I look forward to continuing to work together to help wildfire survivors through this very challenging time.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Ricardo Lara", with a stylized flourish at the end.

RICARDO LARA

Insurance Commissioner

cc: The Honorable Sasha Renée Pérez, Senator, 25th District
The Honorable John Harabedian, Assembly Member, 41st District