

July 15, 2025

The Honorable Paul Tonko
U.S. House of Representatives

Dear Rep. Tonko,

The University at Albany, State University of New York, is home to the New York State Mesonet, a network of 127 weather stations across the state that supplement National Weather Service modeling and observations to provide more accurate and real-time weather information, improving forecasts and informing weather alerts.

In 2023, the University was awarded a \$3 million grant from the U.S. Department of Homeland Security – entitled Exploiting Mesonets for Emergency Preparedness and Response to Weather Extremes (EMPOWER) – to support our researchers in improving emergency management around these increasingly frequent and severe weather events.

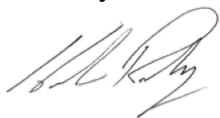
However, on July 8, 2025, with 15 months remaining in the originally planned three-year project, we were notified of the grant's termination. I am writing to request your support in urging U.S. Secretary for Homeland Security Kristi Noem to reinstate this grant.

Under this grant, the DHS Science and Technology Directorate (S&T) has partnered with the University at Albany to build out a better, more accurate weather hazard impact warning and emergency response capability to keep New Yorkers – and ultimately the nation – safe. Since its inception, this project has focused on extreme weather like rapid and severe flooding, similar to what communities in Central Texas experienced in early July. Any funding that is rescinded or stalled could put lives at risk.

The EMPOWER project utilizes the Mesonet's real-time data to develop cutting-edge tools designed specifically for emergency managers and first responders. In a world with increasingly frequent and unpredictable severe weather, these new tools will provide our community safety professionals with unparalleled information to make fast, well-informed decisions when disasters strike, alerting communities to imminent threats and protecting lives and property.

I urge your support in reinstating the \$3 million EMPOWER grant so that the project and its researchers can continue to deliver groundbreaking technology to save Americans from avoidable weather-related harm. Thank you for your attention to this urgent matter.

Sincerely,



Havidán Rodríguez
President