

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

March 5, 2020

The Honorable William Barr
U.S. Attorney General
U.S. Department of Justice
950 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20530-0001

Dear Attorney General Barr:

On September 13, 2018, natural gas explosions and fires devastated the communities of Lawrence, North Andover, and Andover, Massachusetts, killing 18-year-old Leonel Rondon, destroying homes and businesses, and leaving thousands of residents without heat for several months. Columbia Gas of Massachusetts caused this disaster when gas systems over-pressurized during a pipe replacement process, and the company pleaded guilty to violating minimum safety standards of the Natural Gas Pipeline Safety Act on February 26, 2020. As part of this guilty plea, the company must pay a criminal fine of \$53,030,116 to the U.S. government. We urge you to ensure that this money stays in the communities that were affected by this disaster through all means at your disposal, so that it may be used to help right the wrongs done to residents, business owners, and first responders.

We understand that through existing discretionary authority, you can direct penalties from this criminal settlement to support the first responders, counselors, and others who provided services to disaster victims in the Merrimack Valley. The statute states that the discretionary funds can fund the "salaries of personnel who provide services to victims of crime." We ask that you use this authority to support the local first responders and others who bravely served and continue to serve the victims of the September 13 gas explosions, funding their salaries on an ongoing basis.

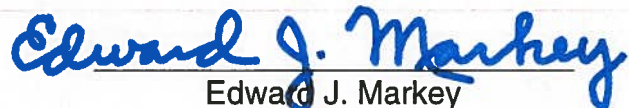
We believe that the Department can and should use all available authorities to ensure that the funds from the Columbia Gas settlement remain in the Merrimack Valley to help the communities who were harmed by this disaster. The Merrimack Valley's first responders and the people affected by the wrongdoing of Columbia Gas of Massachusetts deserve nothing less.

We stand ready to work with you on this matter should additional legislative authority be required to advance this proposal.

Sincerely,



Lori Trahan
U.S. Representative



Edward J. Markey
U.S. Senator



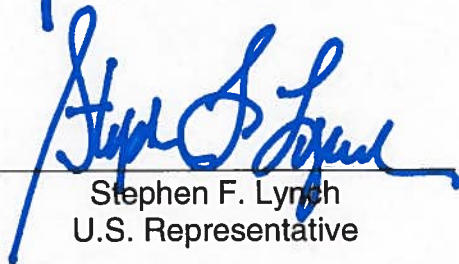
Seth Moulton
U.S. Representative



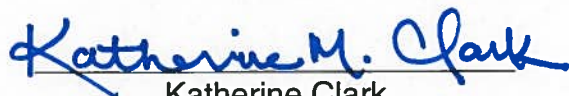
Elizabeth Warren
U.S. Senator



Joseph P. Kennedy, III
U.S. Representative



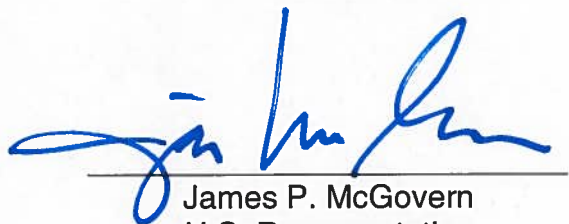
Stephen F. Lynch
U.S. Representative



Katherine Clark
U.S. Representative



Richard E. Neal
U.S. Representative



James P. McGovern
U.S. Representative