

April 21, 2025

The Honorable Howard Lutnick  
Secretary of Commerce  
U.S. Department of Commerce  
1401 Constitution Avenue NW  
Washington, DC 20230

Dear Secretary Lutnick,

I am writing on behalf of the more than 160,000 members of the American Society of Civil Engineers (ASCE) to express our concern over the decision to cut funding and personnel at the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST). NIST is the premier, and in most cases, the only federal institution conducting resilience research focused on the impact of multiple hazards on buildings and communities and on post-disaster studies that can provide the technical basis for improved standards, codes, and practices used in the design, construction, operation, and maintenance of buildings and infrastructure systems.

NIST leads several national efforts within its Engineering Laboratory to develop guidance and tools to help communities improve the resilience of their buildings and infrastructure systems: Community Resilience; National Earthquake Hazard Reduction Program (NEHRP); National Windstorm Impact Reduction Program (NWIRP); Fire Protection and Wildland-Urban Interface (WUI); Progressive Collapse; and Failure Studies.

Founded in 1852, ASCE is the country's oldest civil engineering organization. Representing civil engineers from private practice, government, industry, and academia, it is ASCE's objective to advance the science and profession of engineering to enhance the welfare of humanity. ASCE is a leader in hazard mitigation efforts aimed at protecting public health, safety, and welfare. ASCE develops and maintains standards that provide technical guidelines for promoting safety, reliability, productivity, and efficiency in civil engineering. ASCE works closely with NIST on developing innovative and cost-effective standards. These standards are referenced by model building codes and adopted by state and local jurisdictions and are critical to protecting life and property.

Recent natural and human-induced disasters have shown an urgent need to study and improve the safety and resilience of our built environment. More information is needed to identify the effects of earthquakes, wind, flooding, fire, and intentional damage and to

develop effective mitigation strategies. Performance-based design and life cycle planning for infrastructure require that metrics be developed to assess the likely impacts of disasters on available resources as well as time and cost to return lost elements to service. Adequate funding for research on these topics is essential.

ASCE believes NIST research is critical to organizations like ASCE that develop standards that inform modern building codes. Research results are widely shared and inform the development of standards, such as [ASCE-7 Minimum Design Loads and Associated Criteria for Buildings and Other Structures \(ASCE/SEI 7-22\)](#), and other accepted consensus-based standards. The participation of NIST staff in the development of these standards is invaluable as they possess the knowledge and experience to inform code development and save lives and prevent economic loss.

Research has shown that every dollar invested in building to the latest codes and standards results in \$11 of future avoided losses in the event of a disaster. The detrimental impacts of disasters from recent history, along with the billions of dollars in taxpayer resources expended to facilitate recovery, could have been significantly reduced or even prevented with more consistent and frequent adoption and implementation of building codes. The Federal Emergency Management Agency's (FEMA) 2020 report "Building Codes Save: A Nationwide Study," found that adopting the then-current version of the International Codes (I-Codes) would save the U.S. \$600 billion over the next four decades. The adoption and implementation of building codes is a proven low cost, high impact mitigation strategy.

NIST work in supporting standards setting are important tools in mitigating the impact of natural disasters. Cutting funding to these efforts will ultimately cost the American public, both in terms of lives lost and economic impact. Thank you for your consideration of our view, if we can be of further service, please do not hesitate to contact Martin Hight, ASCE Senior Manager for Government Relations at [mhight@asce.org](mailto:mhight@asce.org) or 202-789-7843.

Sincerely,



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