JON OSSOFF
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United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510–1011

August 3, 2026

The Honorable Dr. Neil Jacobs
Administrator
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
1401 Constitution Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20230

Dear Administrator Jacobs,

I write on behalf of Georgians who continue to suffer from the effects of Hurricane Helene but have been denied the compensation they expected under their hurricane insurance coverage. The Department of Agriculture's Risk Management Agency (RMA) relies on NOAA data on sustained wind speeds to determine whether farmers who purchase Hurricane Insurance Protection – Wind Index (HIP-WI) coverage will receive indemnities following the devastation of a hurricane. Hurricane Helene caused $5.5 billion in agricultural and timber losses in Georgia.[1] Despite these overwhelming damages, RMA determined that several counties in southeast Georgia did not experience requisite "sustained wind" to trigger policy coverage. As a result, growers who purchased HIP-WI coverage in those counties were not compensated.

HIP-WI indemnity payments are made if the National Hurricane Center (NHC) determines that a county, or a county adjacent to it, was impacted by sustained hurricane-force winds, which are defined as those greater than or equal to 64 knots (kt), or 74 miles per hour (mph). During the policy year Hurricane Helene occurred, sustained winds had to be over a period of two minutes.

In the immediate aftermath of Helene, there were concerns about data loss due to disruptions in operations at the NOAA National Centers for Environmental Information.[2]

Given the challenges sustained by NOAA during Hurricane Helene, I request the following:

- Data on the maximum sustained wind speeds during Hurricane Helene in Screven, Effingham, Chatham, Bryan, Evans, Liberty, Long, McIntosh, Wayne, Glynn, and Camden counties.

- Confirmation of whether all relevant weather data collected by NOAA and partners in Georgia during Hurricane Helene was ultimately recovered.

[1] https://extension.uga.edu/topic-areas/timely-topics/helene-report.html
[2] https://www.noaa.gov/news/some-noaa-ncei-websites-systems-down-due-to-helene-devastation-in-asheville-nc

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- If there was any data loss, please provide detailed information about how this was accounted for in NOAA's assessments of Hurricane Helene's impacts.

I look forward to your response by August 21, 2026.

Sincerely,

Jon Ossoff
United States Senator

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COMMITTEE ON RULES AND ADMINISTRATION

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