

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

June 28, 2018

The Honorable Brock Long
Administrator
Federal Emergency Management Agency
500 C Street SW
Washington, DC 20472

Dear Administrator Long:

We write to urge the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) to immediately extend the deadline of its Transitional Shelter Assistance (TSA) program in order to provide eligible applicants additional time to transition to permanent housing in the wake of Hurricane Maria. The TSA program, which helps victims of natural disasters secure temporary housing, went into effect for residents of Puerto Rico on October 30, 2017 and is scheduled to end on June 30, 2018. Given the continuing housing needs of displaced individuals and families after Hurricane Maria, we urge you to grant a sixty-day extension of the TSA program. Moreover, we urge you to help these families access the longer-term stable, affordable homes needed to fully recover by immediately activating the Disaster Housing Assistance Program (DHAP), as requested by Puerto Rico Governor Ricardo Rosselló.

It has been more than 10 months since Hurricane Maria struck Puerto Rico as a Category 4 hurricane resulting in the destruction of the island's central electrical power system, roads, and other critical infrastructure. Nearly 5,000 of the island's residents remain without power, and one month into the new hurricane season, far too many countryside homes are protected only by temporary blue roofing. It is clear that the road to recovery for Puerto Rico continues to be long and challenging.

As you know, under the TSA program FEMA is responsible for making direct payments to participating hotels and motels to act as transitional shelters. In order to be eligible for TSA, applicants must be unable to return to their primary residence after a disaster because it is either uninhabitable or inaccessible. Unfortunately, for the hundreds of displaced families living in the continental United States, for a variety of reasons, returning home is not a possibility in the near future. Left without other housing options, families have had no choice but to double or triple up with other low income survivors, return to uninhabitable homes, sleep in homeless shelters, cars or on the street, or pay more than half of their income on rent, leaving them with few resources to get back on their feet. These precarious housing situations may lead to evictions and, in worst cases, homelessness.

FEMA has the authority to extend the TSA period of assistance, as needed, we urge FEMA to immediately use its authority to extend assistance for those displaced by Hurricane Maria. Additionally, FEMA should immediately activate the DHAP program for those survivors in need of stable, affordable homes. It is unacceptable that FEMA has refused to activate this proven

solution, which has been upheld by past Republican and Democratic administrations as a best practice.

We understand that TSA is a temporary solution, but given the ongoing crisis in Puerto Rico, FEMA and this Administration have yet to complete the mission of ensuring the safety of hundreds of displaced American families across the country. If the administration refuses to extend TSA or activate the DHAP program, it will be knowingly placing families at risk of homelessness. It is within your authority to avoid such consequences, and we urge you to act expeditiously.

Due to the emergency nature of the situation, please provide a response no later than June 29, 2018.

Sincerely,



Robert Menendez
United States Senator



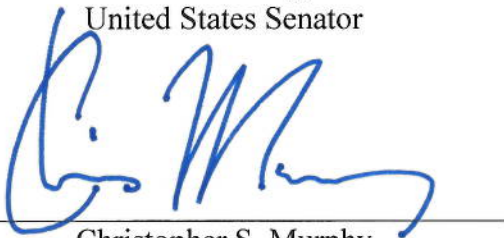
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