

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

September 22, 2017

The President
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President,

Thank you for your swift action to declare federal major disasters in Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands following the devastation caused by Hurricane Maria. In the spirit of providing as much assistance as possible, as quickly as possible, we write to urge you to immediately waive the local cost-sharing requirement by setting the federal cost-share at 100 percent for Public Assistance grants administered by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) to Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands.

Given the challenging financial situation facing both governments, which existed prior to the hurricanes, we are concerned Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands will have extreme difficulty finding the funds to pay the 25 percent local match required for all of the necessary Public Assistance funding they need. This could prevent or delay access to critical federal assistance to clear debris and make emergency repairs to public facilities and infrastructure.

There is precedent for reducing or eliminating the local cost-share requirement following major disasters, and you have the statutory authority to do so pursuant to the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act. We appreciate that you used this authority to adjust the cost-share for the U.S. Virgin Islands after Hurricane Irma earlier this month. We strongly urge you to follow that precedent in this instance given the immense scale of devastation across the various islands. The federal government should not allow the cost-share to be a barrier to getting help to people who are desperately in need. In addition, given the reports of complete power loss and significant damage across all of Puerto Rico, we request that you amend your disaster declaration to cover all 78 municipalities in the Commonwealth.

Thank you for your attention to this urgent request, and we hope that you will continue to all of the available federal assets to work to help the people of Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands respond and recover.

Sincerely,



Kirsten Gillibrand
United States Senator



Charles E. Schumer
United States Senator



Cory A. Booker
United States Senator



Robert Menendez
United States Senator



Elizabeth Warren
United States Senator