

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

October 18, 2017

The Honorable Brock Long
Administrator
Federal Emergency Management Agency
500 C St SW
Washington, DC 2024

To Administrator Long,

We write to urge you to take immediate action to ensure that all survivors of Hurricanes Harvey, Irma, and Maria have a safe, affordable, and accessible home as they recover from these devastating natural disasters. To that end we urge you to enter an Interagency Agreement (IAA) with U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD).

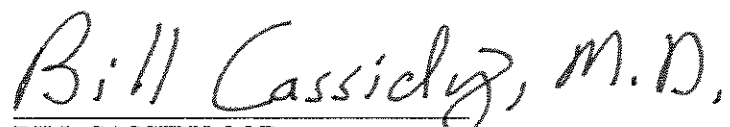
HUD has a vital role in addressing the housing needs of disaster survivors. HUD has decades of experience providing housing opportunities to some of our nation's most vulnerable individuals families – including low income seniors, people with disabilities, families with children, veterans, people experiencing homelessness, and other at-risk populations who are often the hardest-hit by disasters and have the fewest resources to recover afterwards.

When disaster strikes, a major problem is displacement. Tens of thousands of homes have been destroyed and families have been in temporary shelters. That is the case now in Texas, Florida, the Virgin Islands, and especially Puerto Rico, where an estimated 10,000 people are living in shelters.^[1] Through a network of existing programs, HUD may help victims to live in a safe, stable, and affordable home while they work to get back on their feet by providing rental assistance directly to survivors. For example, HUD may elect to use its existing network of local Public Housing Authorities (PHA) to administer tenant based rental assistance and provide case management services to impacted families. To achieve this, FEMA – your agency – must enter into an agreement for HUD to help carry out FEMA's Individual Assistance programs. FEMA and HUD have had IAA after other major recent disasters, like Hurricane Katrina and Superstorm Sandy. We urge you to enter into an agreement with HUD immediately so that thousands of families and individuals have access to stable, affordable rental homes after enduring a nightmarish ordeal of displacement from their home.

While the road ahead for recovery will take many years, FEMA should take immediate action to provide flexibility to allow displaced families and individuals to access housing assistance in any community where housing options are available.

Sincerely,


RICHARD BLUMENTHAL
United States Senator


BILL CASSIDY, M.D.
United States Senator

^[1] Winsor, Morgan. "Puerto Rico to Waive Rent Payments for Public Housing as 10,000 Remain in Shelters." ABC News, ABC News Network, 30 Sept. 2017, abcnews.go.com/US/puerto-rico-approves-moratorium-rent-payments-public-housing/story?id=50197513.