

# Congress of the United States

## House of Representatives

COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND GOVERNMENT REFORM

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<http://oversight.house.gov>

August 14, 2018

The Honorable William B. Long  
Administrator  
Federal Emergency Management Agency  
500 C. Street  
Washington, D.C. 20024

Dear Administrator Long:

According to recent press reports, thousands of Americans living in temporary housing after evacuating Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands in the aftermath of Hurricane Maria will be homeless at the end of the month unless FEMA's Transitional Sheltering Assistance program is extended.<sup>1</sup> Those same press reports indicate that FEMA is telling survivors, some of whom have serious medical issues, to leave the mainland United States and return to Puerto Rico.<sup>2</sup>

Exceptional events call for an exceptional response. FEMA has excused its inadequate response to Hurricane Maria by referring to the unprecedented destruction wreaked by last year's hurricane season. A refusal by FEMA, however, to extend temporary housing aid for Hurricane Maria survivors would treat those survivors as if their needs are not also unprecedented. Governor Ricardo Rosselló, as well as Members of Congress, requested that FEMA activate the Disaster Housing Assistance Program that was used following Hurricane Sandy. On May 15, 2018, FEMA sent Governor Rosselló a letter denying his request.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> *Hurricane Maria: Thousands of Displaced Puerto Ricans Might be Pushed Out of Temporary Housing*, Washington Post (Aug. 11, 2018) (online at [www.washingtonpost.com/national/hurricane-maria-thousands-of-displaced-puerto-ricans-might-be-pushed-out-of-temporary-housing/2018/08/11/e6c413aa-83b0-11e8-9e80-403a221946a7\\_story.html?utm\\_term=.cfd9bb548a74](http://www.washingtonpost.com/national/hurricane-maria-thousands-of-displaced-puerto-ricans-might-be-pushed-out-of-temporary-housing/2018/08/11/e6c413aa-83b0-11e8-9e80-403a221946a7_story.html?utm_term=.cfd9bb548a74)); *Hundreds of People from Puerto Rico, US Virgin Islands Could Soon Be on South Florida Streets*, ABC Local 10 News (July 19, 2018) (online at [www.local10.com/weather/hurricane/hundreds-of-people-from-puerto-rico-us-virgin-islands-could-soon-be-on-south-florida-streets](http://www.local10.com/weather/hurricane/hundreds-of-people-from-puerto-rico-us-virgin-islands-could-soon-be-on-south-florida-streets)).


<sup>2</sup> *FEMA Says It Didn't Treat Puerto Ricans Differently*, Washington Post (Aug. 13, 2018) (online at [www.washingtonpost.com/national/fema-says-it-didnt-treat-puerto-ricans-differently/2018/08/13/4b33c026-9f16-11e8-a3dd-2a1991f075d5\\_story.html?utm\\_term=.9e14234ffec](http://www.washingtonpost.com/national/fema-says-it-didnt-treat-puerto-ricans-differently/2018/08/13/4b33c026-9f16-11e8-a3dd-2a1991f075d5_story.html?utm_term=.9e14234ffec)); See also *Hurricane Maria: Thousands of Displaced Puerto Ricans Might be Pushed Out of Temporary Housing*, Washington Post (Aug. 11, 2018) (online at [www.washingtonpost.com/national/hurricane-maria-thousands-of-displaced-puerto-ricans-might-be-pushed-out-of-temporary-housing/2018/08/11/e6c413aa-83b0-11e8-9e80-403a221946a7\\_story.html?utm\\_term=.cfd9bb548a74](http://www.washingtonpost.com/national/hurricane-maria-thousands-of-displaced-puerto-ricans-might-be-pushed-out-of-temporary-housing/2018/08/11/e6c413aa-83b0-11e8-9e80-403a221946a7_story.html?utm_term=.cfd9bb548a74)).

<sup>3</sup> Letter from Michael Byrne, Federal Coordinating Officer, Federal Emergency Management Agency, to Governor Ricardo Rosselló Nevares (May 15, 2018) (online at [http://nlihc.org/sites/default/files/DHAP\\_FEMA-answer.pdf](http://nlihc.org/sites/default/files/DHAP_FEMA-answer.pdf)).

You indicated during the call you held today with Chairman Gowdy and Ranking Member Cummings that you believe there are reasons not to extend the Temporary Sheltering Assistance program. We appreciate your beginning this conversation but would like more details. Due to the urgency of this situation, we ask that you, or a designated representative, brief our staff no later than August 17, 2018, on: (1) why FEMA is not extending the Transitional Sheltering Assistance program; (2) how Congress can assist FEMA in ensuring that thousands of Hurricane Maria survivors have adequate shelter until they find suitable long term housing options; and (3) FEMA's rationale for denying Governor Rosselló's request to activate the Disaster Housing Assistance Program.

If you have any questions about this request, please contact Britteny Jenkins with Ranking Member Cummings at (202) 225-5051. Thank you for your prompt attention to this request.

Sincerely,



Elijah E. Cummings  
Ranking Member



Stacey E. Plaskett  
Ranking Member  
Subcommittee on Interior,  
Energy, and Environment

cc: The Honorable Trey Gowdy  
Chairman, Committee on Oversight and Government Reform

The Honorable Greg Gianforte  
Chairman, Subcommittee on Interior, Energy, and Environment