

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

May 22, 2018

The Honorable Dr. Benjamin Carson Sr.
Secretary
Department of Housing and Urban Development
451 7th Street SW
Washington, DC 20410

Dear Secretary Carson:

I write to express my strong concern over the brief two-week timeframe for public comment of the Draft Puerto Rico Disaster Recovery Action Plan for the use of Community Development Block Grant-Disaster Recovery (“CDBG-DR”) funds. Accordingly, I am requesting: 1) a 30-day extension of the public comment period; 2) public hearings from the Department of Housing and Urban Development (“HUD”); and 3) official translations of the Allocation Notice and of all other information regarding the CDBG-DR funds.

Given the importance of CDBG-DR funds for Puerto Rico’s rebuilding from Hurricane Maria, it is imperative that requests from stakeholders on the Island be given your full and fair consideration. A 30-day extension of the public comment period would provide communities and grassroots organizations time to review and consider the draft plan, evaluate their housing and infrastructure needs, and offer meaningful commentary. Moreover, by holding multiple public hearings across the Island, HUD, the local housing department, and other decisionmakers would be operating and making public policy with a comprehensive perspective. Lastly, given the overwhelming predominance of Spanish as the language of Puerto Rico, it is imperative that the Allocation Notice and other CDBG-DR information be officially translated into Spanish to ensure that information is effectively communicated to residents of Puerto Rico.

Taken together, making the above improvements to the CDBG-DR process would foster a more open and inclusive process that would incorporate the input of underrepresented communities and their unmet needs. All decisionmakers share a responsibility to ensure that resources are used fairly, efficiently, and effectively, with a degree of accountability and transparency that establishes public confidence in regard to government spending, post-recovery planning, and the overall reconstruction of Puerto Rico. Accordingly, I strongly urge you to make the above improvements to the CDBG-DR process.

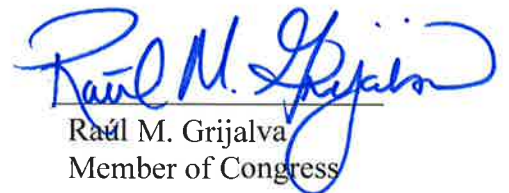
Sincerely,



Nydia M. Velázquez
Member of Congress



Luis V. Gutiérrez
Member of Congress



Raúl M. Grijalva
Member of Congress



Adriano Espaillat
Member of Congress