



NATIONAL LOW INCOME HOUSING COALITION

June 7, 2018

The Honorable Ann Wagner
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

To Congresswoman Wagner:

The National Low Income Housing Coalition (NLIHC) and its Disaster Housing Recovery Coalition (DHRC) of more than 700 local, state, and national organizations strongly support the “Reforming Disaster Recovery Act of 2017.” The Disaster Housing Recovery Coalition includes hundreds of organizations working directly with disaster-impacted communities and with first-hand experience recovering after disasters. Together, we work to ensure low income survivors and communities receive the housing assistance needed for a full recovery. We commend you for your leadership in introducing this important bill.

We are grateful that the Reforming Disaster Recovery Act permanently authorizes the federal government’s primary long-term disaster rebuilding program, the Community Development Block Grant Disaster Recovery (CDBG-DR) program, which provides states and communities with the flexible resources needed to rebuild affordable housing and infrastructure after a disaster. The bill also establishes important safeguards and tools to help ensure that federal disaster recovery and rebuilding efforts reach all impacted households, including those with the lowest incomes who are often the hardest-hit by disasters and have the fewest resources to recover.

We are especially pleased this bill includes measures that ensure scarce resources are prioritized for low income survivors and communities that face the greatest recovery needs. It requires states to allocate resources equitably between housing and infrastructure priorities and among homeowners, renters, and people experiencing homelessness. The bill solidifies in statute the requirement that 70 percent of funds must benefit low and moderate income communities and sets clearer direction to the Department of Housing and Urban Development on when it can adjust this requirement. By directing the Office of Inspector General to oversee program outcomes, the bill will help ensure that CDBG-DR delivers on Congress’s intent to serve all eligible survivors. The bill makes public data on the impact of the disaster and how resources are spent, promoting transparency, allowing effective public participation in the development of state recovery plans, and helping state and local governments and philanthropic organizations better identify critical gaps in services. The authorization bill also helps Congress ensure that the recovery process is administered consistently and that dollars can flow more quickly to communities in need.

On behalf of NLIHC and the DHRC, we commend you for your leadership in drafting this landmark legislation, which would ensure that federal recovery efforts are better able to reach the lowest income seniors, people with disabilities, families with children, people experiencing homelessness, and other vulnerable people and the communities they live in. We look forward to working with Congressional leaders to further improve and enact this important legislation.

Sincerely,

Diane Yentel
President and CEO, National Low Income Housing Coalition