



June 12, 2019

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

To Secretary Carson:

On behalf of the Disaster Housing Recovery Coalition, I write to urge the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) to take immediate action to release billions of dollars in Congressionally approved disaster recovery funding to help communities devastated by Hurricanes Harvey, Irma, and Maria better prepare for future disasters. It has now been 16 months since Congress approved more than \$16 billion dollars in Community Development Block Grant – Disaster Relief (CDBG-DR) mitigation funds. Because of unreasonably delays, Congress directed HUD in its recently enacted disaster aid package to release the Federal Register Notice guiding these funds within 90 days. The 2019 hurricane season has already begun; every day of inaction puts American lives at risk.

The Disaster Housing Recovery Coalition is led by the National Low Income Housing Coalition and includes over 800 national, state, and local organizations, including many organizations working directly with disaster-impacted communities and with first-hand experience recovering after disasters. We work to ensure that federal disaster recovery 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 afterwards.

In Puerto Rico, many of the most vulnerable survivors are still living in flood-prone areas without the critical infrastructure necessary to withstand another storm. More than 300,000 homes need repairs and neighborhoods still waiting for electricity to be fully restored. Nearly 33,000 poor families sleep in homes where roofs that were blown off during Hurricane Maria have yet to be replaced. Withholding these mitigation grants mean that grantees including Puerto Rico, Texas, Florida, Louisiana, and other areas cannot even begin planning for how they will invest these funds to make their communities more resilient to future natural disasters.

In addition, HUD must quickly remove other federal barriers to recovery in Puerto Rico. Although HUD approved Puerto Rico's CDBG-DR action plans, HUD has yet to sign the grant agreement allowing for the use of these funds, further delaying the island's recovery.

Rebuilding and mitigation resources are critically needed to protect the lowest-income survivors when the next disaster hits. HUD must immediately release billions of dollars in aid approved by Congress to help Puerto Rico, Florida, and Texas fully recover and rebuild strong and resilient communities.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Diane Yentel". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Diane Yentel
President and CEO
National Low Income Housing Coalition