



**NATIONAL LOW INCOME
HOUSING COALITION**

August 8, 2023

The Honorable Chuck Schumer
Majority Leader
U.S. Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Minority Leader
U.S. Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy
Speaker
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Hakeem Jeffries
Minority Leader
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20510

To Majority Leader Schumer, Speaker McCarthy, Minority Leader McConnell, and Minority Leader Jeffries:

We, the 900 members of the Disaster Housing Recovery Coalition (DHRC), urge Congress to pass an emergency disaster supplemental appropriations bill funding the country's disaster response and recovery efforts when Congress returns in September. This package must include the "[Reforming Disaster Recovery Act of 2023](#)," which establishes important safeguards ensuring that long-term recovery funds reach those most in need of assistance.

Convened by the National Low Income Housing Coalition (NLIHC), the Disaster Housing Recovery Coalition (DHRC) is a group of over 900 local, state, and national organizations including many organizations working directly with disaster-impacted communities and with first-hand experience recovering after disasters. Together, we work to ensure that federal disaster recovery efforts reach all impacted households, including the lowest-income and most marginalized survivors. A list of DHRC members is enclosed along with this letter.

While we are only halfway through the calendar year, we have seen numerous unprecedented weather events impact communities from California to New England. As we enter the height of the 2023 Atlantic Hurricane Season, it is of pivotal importance that both the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) have the resources they need to effectively respond to disasters, assist communities in recovering afterward, and ensure that communities can increase their resilience to disasters in the future.

The projected \$4.2 million deficit of FEMA's Disaster Relief Fund must be quickly addressed to ensure that the agency can continue its mission in the face of upcoming disasters. While the agency has reiterated that response operations will not be directly impacted, this comes at the cost of important recovery, resilience, and mitigation projects that may be put on hold to deal with the immediate needs of disaster response. Many communities have been waiting years to implement projects assisting households with low incomes impacted by or at risk from disasters; sidelining these efforts places even greater disaster risk on those with the least ability to recover afterward. Every dollar spent on federal mitigation grants saves an average of \$6 in post-disaster recovery spending, and every second of delay equates to significant increases in federal disaster recovery obligations.

HUD's Community Development Block Grant - Disaster Recovery (CDBG-DR) program provides flexible grants to help states and localities recover from disasters and rebuild affordable housing and other infrastructure. It is the only source for long term recovery funds after major disasters, but because the program has not been permanently authorized, these important funds are often slow to reach disaster survivors. By approving CDBG-DR funding for 2023 disasters via an emergency disaster supplemental appropriations bill, Congress can ensure these funds are ready and available for ongoing disaster recovery efforts and disasters occurring later in the calendar year. With supplemental funding, disaster impacted communities and households will not be forced to wait for congressional action before commencing long-term recovery efforts.

The lack of permanent CDBG-DR authorization not only slows the distribution of CDBG-DR funds but also allows for vital disaster recovery resources to be diverted away from those communities and households with the greatest needs after disasters. By including the bipartisan "Reforming Disaster Recovery Act of 2023" in the emergency disaster supplemental appropriations bill, Congress can formally authorize the CDBG-DR program and provide important safeguards to help ensure funds are made quickly available after disasters. By doing so, Congress can ensure all impacted survivors and their communities can fully recover; that communities are receiving the assistance fairly based on need; and that the program prioritizes transparency and oversight over how and where funds are being used.

There is bipartisan consensus for permanently authorizing CDBG-DR. HUD and the Government Accountability Office (GAO), under the past two administrations, have agreed that permanently authorizing the CDBG-DR program would vastly improve its operation by allowing the program to be administered consistently, facilitating the quick flow of funds to communities in need. The "Reforming Disaster Recovery Act of 2023" has garnered bipartisan support from numerous lawmakers in the Senate, including the bill's cosponsors: Senators Brian Schatz (D-Hawai'i), Susan Collins (R-Maine), Patty Murray (D-Wash.), Cindy Hyde-Smith (R-Miss.), Ron Wyden (D-Ore.), Roger Wicker (R-Miss.), Chris Van Hollen (D-Md.), Bill Cassidy (R-La.), Jon Tester (D-Mont.), Thom Tillis (R-N.C.), Ben Ray Lujan (D-N.M.), Todd Young (R-Ind.), Cory Booker (D-N.J.), and Alex Padilla (D-Calif.). The bill was passed by the House of Representatives in both 2019 and 2022.

Again, we urge Congress to pass an emergency disaster supplemental appropriations bill funding the country's disaster response and recovery efforts that includes the "Reforming Disaster Recovery Act of 2023" to permanently authorize the country's only long-term federal disaster recovery program. For more information regarding the bill and this request, please contact Noah Patton, Senior Policy Analyst for Disaster Recovery at NLIHC (npatton@nlihc.org).

Sincerely,

The Disaster Housing Recovery Coalition

CC:

Chairman Sherrod Brown, Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs, U.S. Senate
Ranking Member Tim Scott, Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs, U.S. Senate
Chairman Patrick McHenry, Committee on Financial Services, U.S. House of Representatives
Ranking Member Maxine Waters, Committee on Financial Services, U.S. House of Representatives