



December 12, 2023

The Honorable Brian Schatz
Chairman
Appropriations Subcommittee on Transportation, Housing, and Urban Development
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Cindy Hyde-Smith
Ranking Member
Appropriations Subcommittee on Transportation, Housing, and Urban Development
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

To Chairman Schatz and Ranking Member Hyde-Smith,

We, the undersigned organizations working in disaster-impacted areas, on behalf of the 900 members of the NLIHC-led Disaster Housing Recovery Coalition (DHRC), urge Congress to pass funding for the country's disaster response and recovery efforts as soon as possible. This package must include robust funding for long-term recovery efforts through the Community Development Block Grant – Disaster Recovery (CDBG-DR) program facilitated by the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). We also urge you to enact the "Reforming Disaster Recovery Act of 2023" to permanently authorize the CDBG-DR program and put in place critical guardrails to ensure funds reach households with the greatest needs.

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.

At the end of the calendar year, we have seen numerous unprecedented disasters impact communities from eleven different states and territories, spanning from the Pacific to New England. Alabama, Arkansas, California, Florida, Georgia, Hawaii, Guam, Illinois, Indiana, Mississippi, Vermont, and multiple tribal nations are all waiting for congressional action to ensure that their disaster-impacted communities can recover. It is of pivotal importance that these states, territories, and tribal nations, receive the resources they need to effectively assist communities in recovering, a process delayed and hampered by the lack of federal funding for long-term recovery.

CDBG-DR funds pay for vital aspects of disaster recovery, including providing rental assistance to prevent the permanent displacement of impacted households, repairing damaged housing, constructing replacement housing, economic development, and

infrastructure repair. It is often the **only** source for long-term recovery funds for the lowest-income disaster survivors after major disasters, but because the program has not been permanently authorized, these important funds are often slow to reach disaster survivors.

Without these congressionally approved funds, the planning and execution of these activities have, at best, been significantly hampered, and, at worst, have yet to even begin. Without a dedicated source of long-term recovery funds, disaster-impacted states, territories, and tribal nations are being forced to siphon funding from other critically important programs to fund their ongoing disaster recovery efforts in a piecemeal fashion, needlessly curtailing important support for low- and moderate-income families in other areas. These challenges are made worse by the lack of permanent authorization.

Other areas are relying on private donations to try and piece together funding for needed recovery activities and resiliency efforts to prepare for future disasters. For example, Hawaii has been forced to reallocate over \$150 million in funds to cover the cost of recovery from the devastating wildfires on Maui, including funding for housing in other parts of the state. Other states, like Vermont, have been selling socks to raise the money necessary for recovery after catastrophic flooding, while others have no choice but to await federal funds, having spent what they could during disaster response and early recovery efforts. Disaster-impacted households have only rapidly dwindling support which, unless remedied by congressional approval of long-term recovery funds, will lead to their permanent displacement or, at worst, homelessness.

The CDBG-DR program's flexible grants are vital to states', localities', and tribal nations' recovery disasters and rebuilding efforts after a disaster strikes. By approving CDBG-DR funding for 2023 disasters, Congress can ensure that these funds are ready and available for ongoing disaster response and recovery efforts. By including the bipartisan "Reforming Disaster Recovery Act of 2023" within any package including long-term disaster assistance, Congress can formally authorize the CDBG-DR program and provide important safeguards to help ensure funds are made quickly available after disasters so that 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.

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

Sincerely,

Arkansas

ACHANGE

California

California Coalition for Rural Housing
Community Housing Improvement Program (CHIP)
California Housing Partnership

Disaster Justice Network
HPP Cares
Sonoma County Community Organizations Active in Disaster (Sonoma COAD)
Southern California Association of Nonprofit Housing (SCANPH)
Napa Valley Community Organizations Active in Disaster (Napa Valley COAD)

Florida

Affordable Homeownership Foundation Inc.
Florida Legal Services, Inc.

Georgia

Georgia Advancing Communities Together, Inc.
Alliance 85

Hawaii

Medical-Legal Partnership for Children in Hawaii
Share Your Manna

Illinois

Housing Action Illinois
Progress Center for Independent Living

Indiana

Corporation for Supportive Housing
Prosperity Indiana
Indiana Coalition Against Domestic Violence Inc.
Fair Housing Center of Central Indiana
Build Change

Mississippi

Mississippi Center for Justice
Mississippi Rising Coalition

Tribal Nations

United Native American Housing Association

Vermont

Champlain Housing Trust
Housing and Homelessness Alliance of Vermont

CC:

The Honorable Chuck Schumer, Majority Leader, U.S. Senate
The Honorable Mitch McConnell, Minority Leader, U.S. Senate
The Honorable Mike Johnson, Speaker, U.S. House of Representatives
The Honorable Hakeem Jeffries, Minority Leader, U.S. House of Representatives
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
Chairwoman Kay Granger, Committee on Appropriations, U.S. House of Representatives
Ranking Member Rosa DeLauro, Committee on Appropriations, U.S. House of Representatives