

The Honorable Deanne Criswell
Administrator
Federal Emergency Management Agency
500 C Street, S.W.
Washington, DC 20024

June 19, 2023

To Administrator Criswell,

We are community-based groups in New Jersey and national organizations who have been assisting survivors of Hurricane Ida since it made landfall in August 2021, almost two years ago. In December of last year, we wrote to you to document the many ways that FEMA's programs were failing Ida survivors and requesting that you make accommodations in the programs to extend deadlines, reopen applications, and otherwise make real efforts to ensure that FEMA's programs help more than a handful of survivors in New Jersey.

We have yet to receive a response to our December letter. We are following up now to request that you meet with us to discuss our urgent concerns about FEMA's Ida programs, which have delivered far too little help to the tens of thousands of people who should have been eligible to receive assistance. Please find our previous letter attached.

Since we last wrote to you, FEMA's March 2023 deadline for continued temporary rental assistance has now passed, with fewer than 200 survivors having received assistance under the program. This is unacceptable. For a similar program after Superstorm Sandy a decade ago, more than 10,000 New Jersey residents qualified for and received continued rental assistance. According to FEMA's own data, 44,993 people were served by its Individual Aid Program in the immediate aftermath of Ida. It is simply not credible that fewer than 300 survivors out of almost 45,000 would qualify for ongoing assistance to rebuild their lives.

HUD-funded disaster recovery programs are now starting to roll out, but these are not a substitute for FEMA's essential programs. HUD programs do not cover reimbursement of repair expenses or funding for lost household contents, which are essential forms of assistance for most survivors. Moreover, HUD programs are intended to support low- and moderate-income households. People who could have been made whole by FEMA programs should not be tracked into HUD programs that are designed for other purposes, reducing the overall amount of assistance available to New Jersey because FEMA programs didn't deliver.

We are disappointed not to have received a response to our previous concerns, and respectfully request that you designate someone from your team to coordinate with us to arrange an in-person meeting, either in New Jersey or Washington, DC, in June. Meghan Mertyr is the point of contact for our group to assist in arranging a time and place. She can be reached at meghan@newjerseyop.org.

Sincerely,

Adam Gordon
Executive Director
Fair Share Housing



Amanda Devecka-Rinear
Executive Director
New Jersey Resource Project



Staci Berger
Executive Director
Housing & Community
Development Network of New Jersey



Antoinette Miles
Interim State Director
New Jersey Working Families



Maria Lopez-Nuñez
Deputy Director
Organizing and Advocacy
Ironbound Community
Corporation



Vincent Mann
Chief
Ramapough Lenape Turtle
Clan



Diane Yentel
President and CEO
National Low Income
Housing Coalition



Kim Gaddy
Executive Director
South Ward Environmental
Alliance



Melissa Miles
Executive Director
New Jersey Environmental
Justice Alliance



Attachment: December 2, 2022 letter

CC:

Samuel Viavattine, Deputy Commissioner
New Jersey Department of Community Affairs

Daniel Kelly, Executive Director
Governor's Disaster Recovery Office

Courtney Wald-Wittkop, Program Manager
NJDEP Blue Acres

Parimal Garg, Chief Counsel
Office of the Governor

Senator Bob Menezes

Senator Cory Booker

Congressman Donald Norcross

Congressman Jeff Van Drew

Congressman Andy Kim

Congressman Chris Smith

Congressman Josh Gottheimer

Congressman Frank Pallone

Congressman Thomas Kean

Congressman Albio Sires

Congressman Bill Pascrell

Congressman Donald Payne Jr.

Congresswoman Mikie Sherrill

Congresswoman Bonnie Watson Coleman