

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

December 4, 2017

The Honorable Thad Cochran
Chairman
Senate Committee on Appropriations
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Patrick Leahy
Vice Chairman
Senate Committee on Appropriations
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Rodney P. Frelinghuysen
Chairman
House Committee on Appropriations
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Nita Lowey
Ranking Member
House Committee on Appropriations
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairmen Cochran and Frelinghuysen, and Ranking Members Leahy and Lowey:

I am writing to express my concerns regarding the Administration's woefully inadequate and irresponsible supplemental funding request, which calls for an additional \$44 billion to address ongoing recovery efforts of Texas, Florida, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands. This insufficient request is tone-deaf to the catastrophic level of destruction caused during this hurricane season. Given the severity of the devastation, especially in Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands, I ask that you swiftly begin considering a supplemental disaster appropriations package that is large and robust enough to meet this unprecedented challenge.

I specifically ask that you pay close consideration to the funding request made by the governments of Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands. Given their lack of full voting representation in Congress, they must rely on the United States government to act in their best interests. The widespread devastation caused by Hurricanes Irma and Maria touched the lives of every American citizen living in Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands. These millions of U.S. citizens living on those islands have experienced significant property damage, symptoms of post-traumatic stress, and loss of life. And as hard as it is to imagine, things will only get worse if we do not address their urgent funding needs, including agriculture and food needs, water sanitation, housing, medical supplies, and critical infrastructure.

More than two months after both hurricanes ravaged these Caribbean islands, none of them is close to fully restoring their electrical power. While it has been difficult to fully assess the damages in these territories, their healthcare woes have been heavily documented, which the Administration completely ignores by not requesting additional Medicaid assistance. It is vital that Congress protects all American citizens and provides the resources necessary to rebuild and sustain communities that were devastated by Hurricanes Irma and Maria.

In addition, it is essential that federal funds for Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands go to relief, recovery, and rebuilding, and that they not flow to creditors. Strong safeguards must be put in place to ensure that debtholders—especially vulture funds—do not receive these funds either directly or indirectly.

The road to recovery for these impacted communities cannot be paved by excuses and broken promises. Congress has an obligation to provide the American citizens living in Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands all the tools necessary to fully rebuild and prevent further loss of life. Our fellow citizens should not be dying in the dark waiting for their government’s assistance. We appreciate your leadership in helping these territories recover and thank you in advance for your consideration of this request. We look forward to working with you on this critical issue.

Sincerely,



Robert Menendez



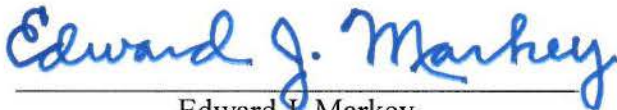
Elizabeth Warren



Richard Blumenthal



Cory A. Booker



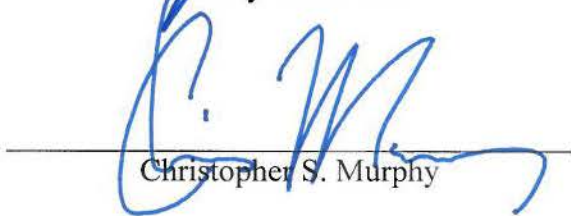
Edward J. Markey



Tammy Duckworth



Bernard Sanders



Christopher S. Murphy