

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20510

September 18, 2018

President Donald J. Trump
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

We write to denounce your recent statements about the fatalities in Puerto Rico from Hurricanes Irma and Maria and their aftermath. These comments were grossly inaccurate, callous, embarrassing and beneath the dignity of the Office of the President of the United States. We call on you to immediately apologize and set the record straight by publicly acknowledging the official death toll.

As you are well aware, Puerto Rico's official death toll currently stands at 2,975 and was based on a months-long study by researchers at George Washington University's Milken Institute School of Public Health.¹ This figure is consistent with other credible estimates, including a study by researchers from the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health, Carlos Albizu University in Puerto Rico, and the University of Colorado School of Medicine.² Furthermore, the Puerto Rico government's own official mortality data showed that "there were at least 1,400 additional deaths on the island in the months after Hurricane Maria as compared with the same time the previous year."³ When you wrote on Twitter, "3000 people did not die in the two hurricanes that hit Puerto Rico," you sought to distort the truth and, in doing so, gravely insulted the mourning families of the thousands of American citizens who died from Maria and the storm's aftermath.

Your claim that the increased death toll "was done by the Democrats in order to make me look as bad as possible" is highly offensive—not just to your fellow public servants who happen not to share your party affiliation, but also to the people of Puerto Rico who lost friends and family in the hurricanes and their aftermath. The lost lives of U.S. citizens are no political stunt, and this is not a partisan matter. In fact, one could easily surmise that your comment is a blatant effort to politicize this national tragedy to distract, divide and deflect blame from how the federal government responded to the hurricane.

¹ George Washington University Milken Institute School of Public Health, "Milken Institute SPH Project Will Estimate the Excess Mortality in Puerto Rico Tied to Hurricane Maria," February 22, 2018, <https://publichealth.gwu.edu/content/milken-institute-sph-project-will-estimate-excess-mortality-puerto-rico-tied-hurricane-maria>.

² New England Journal of Medicine, "Mortality in Puerto Rico after Hurricane Maria," Nishant Koshore et al., July 12, 2018, <https://www.nejm.org/doi/full/10.1056/NEJMsa1803972>.

³ Washington Post, "New Puerto Rico data shows deaths increased by 1,400 after Hurricane Maria," Arelis R. Hernández, June 1, 2018, https://www.washingtonpost.com/national/new-puerto-rico-data-shows-deaths-increased-by-1400-after-hurricane-maria/2018/06/01/43bb4278-65e2-11e8-99d2-0d678ec08c2f_story.html.


Finally, your comment “If a person died for any reason, like old age, just add them onto the list” betrayed a profound misinterpretation of hurricanes’ impact on mortality. Many lives lost in the weeks following the hurricane could have been prevented by an effective response—but they were not. You then doubled down on this comment in multiple tweets the next day. It is unclear whether your commentary on this topic stems from ignorance of the post-storm reality in Puerto Rico or a willful effort to mislead and manipulate the American people about the humanitarian crisis that befell their fellow citizens. Regardless of your motivation, this false statement is unacceptable and must be retracted.

After a disaster, the President needs to lead the country in the recovery effort, not attempt to shift blame or openly question the tragic loss of life. As President of the United States, you have a solemn obligation to lead and serve all American citizens, regardless of their political party or whether they reside in the mainland United States or in the territories. In impugning the Island’s suffering after Maria, you have abdicated that responsibility.


Puerto Ricans are American citizens who have served and shed blood in our wars, giving their lives to defend our nation’s freedoms. They deserve to be treated with the same dignity and respect we would afford any American citizens following a catastrophic storm.

To that end, we call on you to apologize for your unconscionable and unfounded claims, which belittle the scale of the tragedy suffered by the people of Puerto Rico and dishonestly cast partisan blame for their deaths. We also ask that you improve your efforts to aid Puerto Rico in its recovery and to ensure your Administration provides an effective, efficient and compassionate response to Hurricane Florence. You owe this to the U.S. citizens in Puerto Rico and across the United States of America.


Sincerely,



Elizabeth Warren
United States Senator



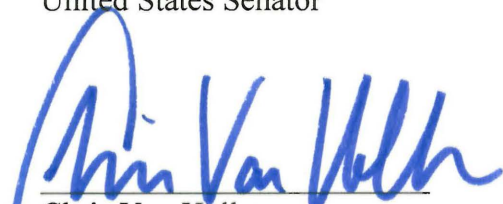
Nydia M. Velázquez
Member of Congress



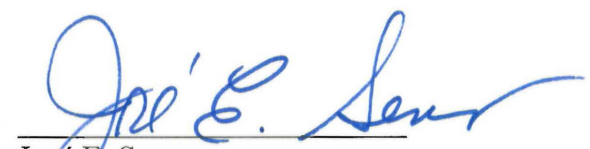
Edward J. Markey
United States Senator



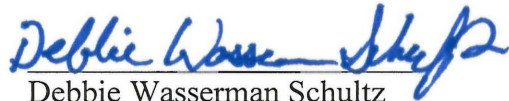
Katherine Clark
Member of Congress



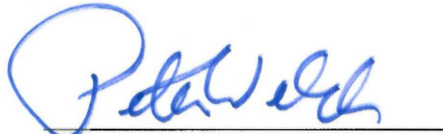
Chris Van Hollen
United States Senator




José E. Serrano
Member of Congress



Debbie Wasserman Schultz
Member of Congress

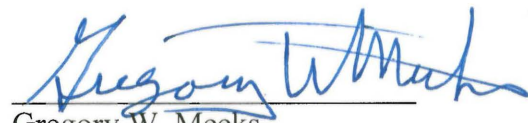

Bennie Thompson
Member of Congress



Peter Welch
Member of Congress



Frank Pallone, Jr.
Member of Congress



Eliot L. Engel
Member of Congress



Ted Deutch
Member of Congress

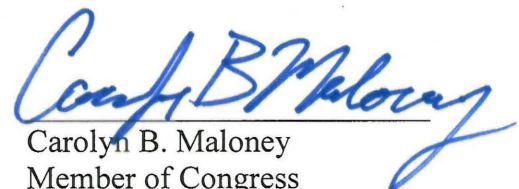

Gregory W. Meeks
Member of Congress

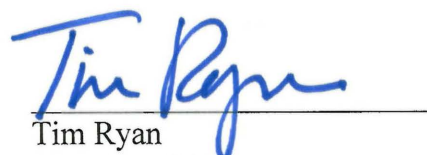

Eleanor Holmes Norton
Member of Congress



Robert A. Brady
Member of Congress

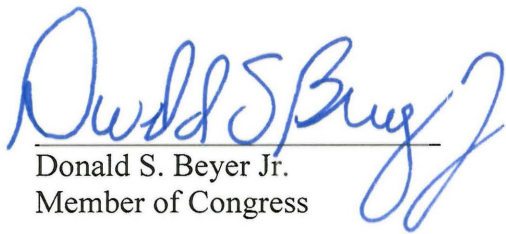

Bonnie Watson Coleman
Member of Congress


Brian Higgins
Member of Congress

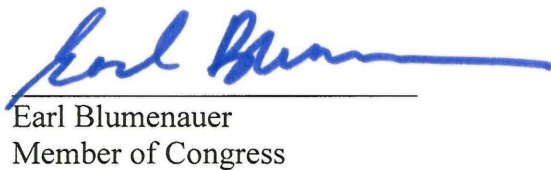

Carolyn B. Maloney
Member of Congress

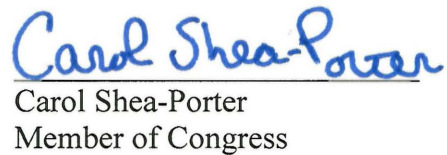

Tim Ryan
Member of Congress


Mike Quigley
Member of Congress

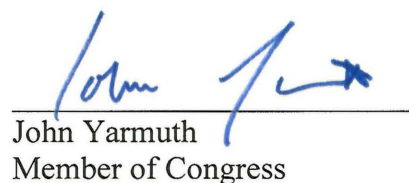

Donald S. Beyer Jr.
Member of Congress


Grace F. Napolitano
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Earl Blumenauer
Member of Congress

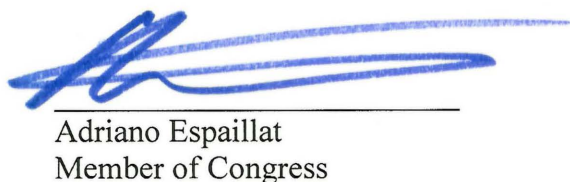

Carol Shea-Porter
Member of Congress


Zoe Lofgren
Member of Congress

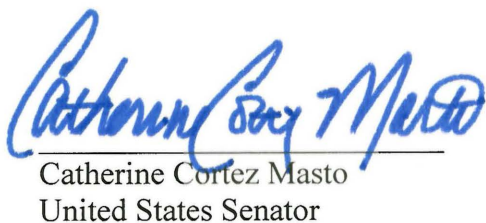

John Yarmuth
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Luis V. Gutiérrez
Member of Congress


Ruben Gallego
Member of Congress

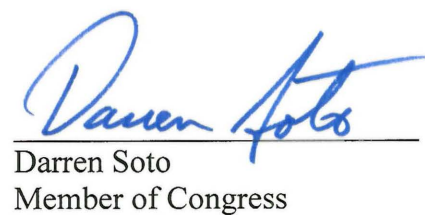

Adriano Espaillat
Member of Congress


Kathy Castor
Member of Congress


Catherine Cortez Masto
United States Senator


Jamie Raskin
Member of Congress


Nanette Diaz Barragán
Member of Congress


Darren Soto
Member of Congress



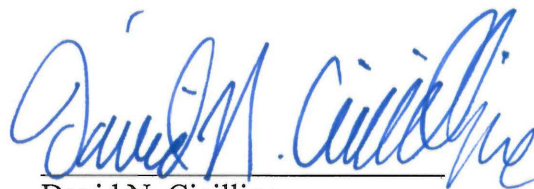
Ruben J. Kihuen
Member of Congress



Anthony Brown
Member of Congress



Jacky Rosen
Member of Congress



David N. Cicilline
Member of Congress



A. Donald McEachin
Member of Congress



Jared Huffman
Member of Congress



Bill Pascrell, Jr.
Member of Congress



Norma J. Torres
Member of Congress



Diana DeGette
Member of Congress



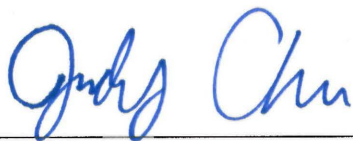
Stephen F. Lynch
Member of Congress



James P. McGovern
Member of Congress




Hakeem Jeffries
Member of Congress




Judy Chu
Member of Congress



Salud O. Carbajal
Member of Congress



Jerrold Nadler
Member of Congress


Jan Schakowsky
Member of Congress

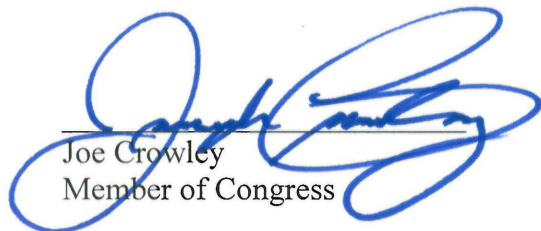

Lucille Roybal-Allard
Member of Congress



Donald Norcross
Member of Congress


Alan Lowenthal
Member of Congress


Dianne Feinstein
United States Senator

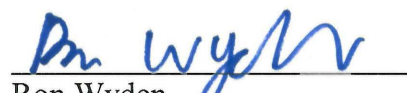

Pramila Jayapal
Member of Congress


Joe Crowley
Member of Congress



Alcee L. Hastings
Member of Congress


Keith Ellison
Member of Congress


Jim Cooper
Member of Congress

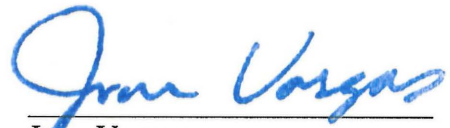

Ron Wyden
United States Senator


Joaquin Castro
Member of Congress


Richard E. Neal
Member of Congress



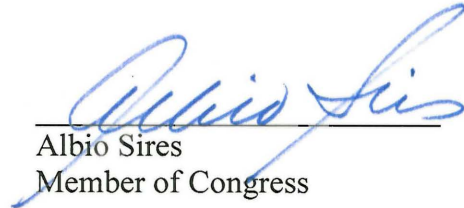
Val Butler Demings
Member of Congress



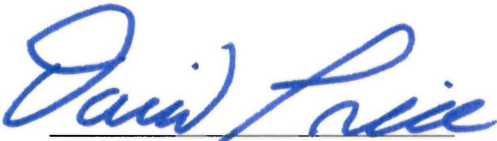
Juan Vargas
Member of Congress



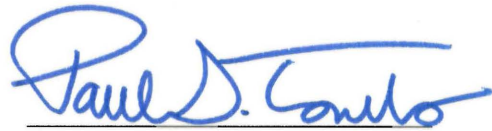
Kathleen M. Rice
Member of Congress



Albio Sires
Member of Congress



David E. Price
Member of Congress



Paul D. Tonko
Member of Congress



Rosa L. DeLauro
Member of Congress



Michelle Lujan Grisham
Member of Congress



Charlie Crist
Member of Congress



Alma S. Adams, Ph.D.
Member of Congress



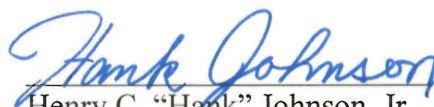
Eddie Bernice Johnson
Member of Congress



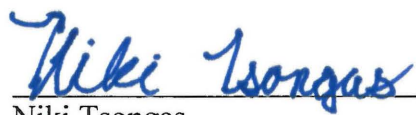
Yvette D. Clarke
Member of Congress



Mark Pocan
Member of Congress



Henry C. "Hank" Johnson, Jr.
Member of Congress



Niki Tsongas
Member of Congress



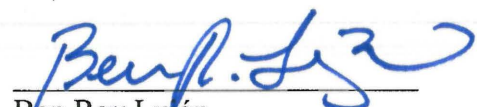
Donald M. Payne, Jr.
Member of Congress



Kirsten Gillibrand
United States Senator



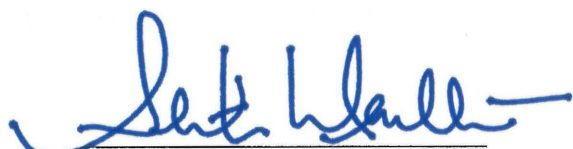
Brendan F. Boyle
Member of Congress



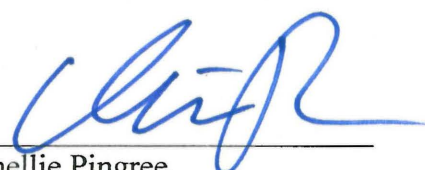
Ben Ray Lujan
Member of Congress



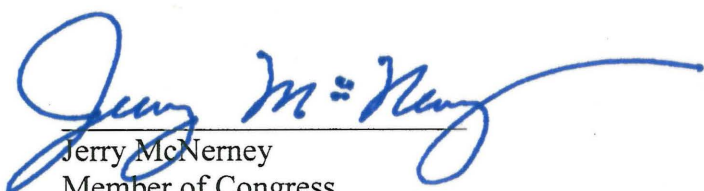
James R. Langevin
Member of Congress



Seth Moulton
Member of Congress



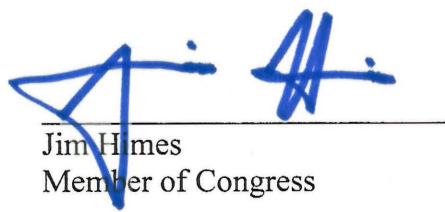
Chellie Pingree
Member of Congress



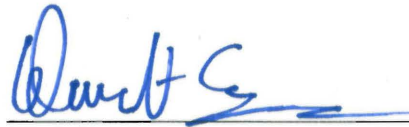
Jerry McNerney
Member of Congress



Betty McCollum
Member of Congress



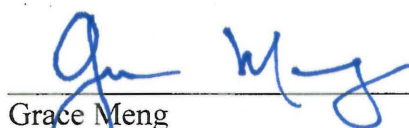
Jim Himes
Member of Congress



Dwight Evans
Member of Congress




Bradley S. Schneider
Member of Congress




Grace Meng
Member of Congress


Jackie Speier
Member of Congress



Brenda L. Lawrence
Member of Congress


Tony Cárdenas
Member of Congress


Robert C. "Bobby" Scott
Member of Congress

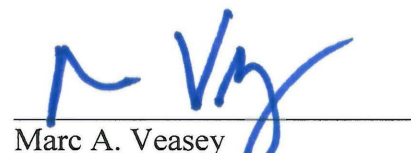

Al Lawson
Member of Congress



Mark DeSaulnier
Member of Congress

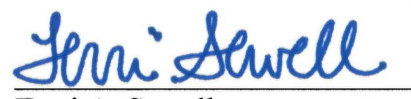

Ro Khanna
Member of Congress

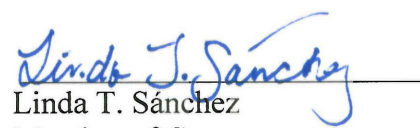

Lloyd Doggett
Member of Congress



André Carson
Member of Congress


Marc A. Veasey
Member of Congress


Adam Smith
Member of Congress

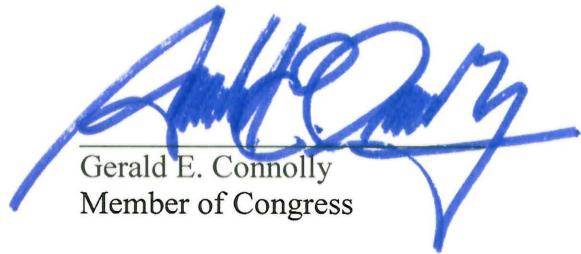

Terri A. Sewell
Member of Congress


Linda T. Sánchez
Member of Congress


Thomas R. Suozzi
Member of Congress



Ted W. Lieu
Member of Congress




Gerald E. Connolly
Member of Congress



Peter A. DeFazio
Member of Congress



Bernard Sanders
United States Senator



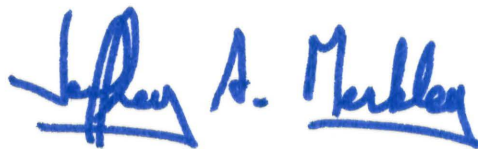
Derek Kilmer
Member of Congress



J. Luis Correa
Member of Congress



Benjamin L. Cardin
United States Senator



Jeffrey A. Merkley
United States Senator



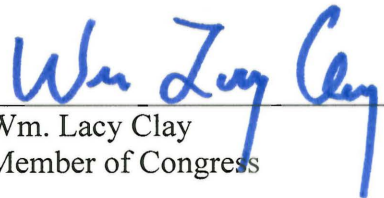
Danny K. Davis
Member of Congress



Tammy Duckworth
United States Senator



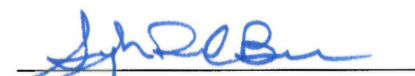
Richard Blumenthal
United States Senator



Wm. Lacy Clay
Member of Congress



Robert Menendez
United States Senator



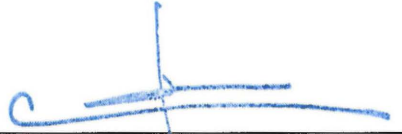
Suzan K. DelBene
Member of Congress



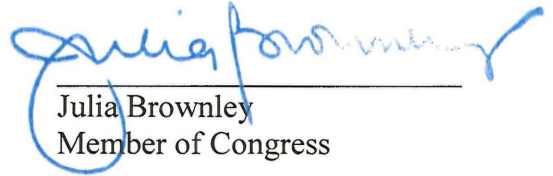
Elijah E. Cummings
Member of Congress



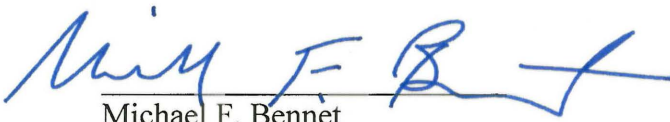
Robin Kelly
Member of Congress



Colleen Hanabusa
Member of Congress



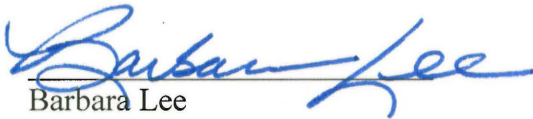
Julia Brownley
Member of Congress



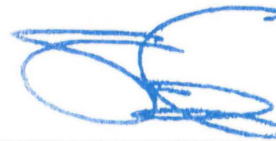
Michael F. Bennet
United States Senator



Raúl M. Grijalva
Member of Congress



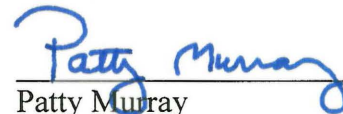
Barbara Lee
Member of Congress



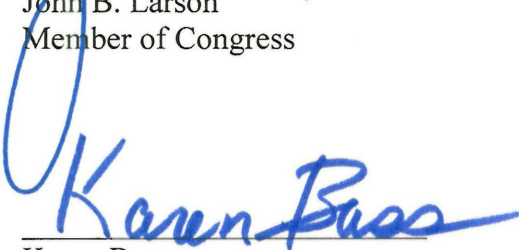
Sean Patrick Maloney
Member of Congress



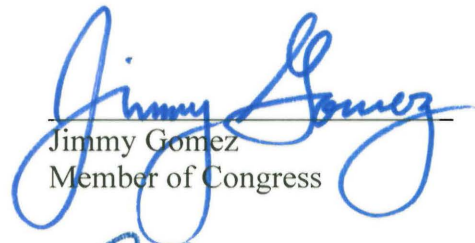
John B. Larson
Member of Congress



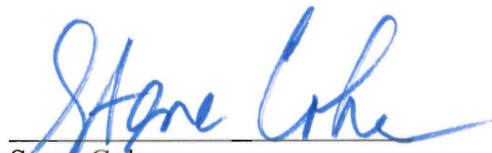
Patty Murray
United States Senator



Karen Bass
Member of Congress



Jimmy Gomez
Member of Congress



Steve Cohen
Member of Congress



Cheri Bustos
Member of Congress