

June 21, 2018

Deputy Secretary Pam Patenaude
U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development
451 7th Street, S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20410

Dear Deputy Secretary Patenaude,

We write to follow up on your conversation with Senator Warren and FEMA Administrator Brock Long on June 11th regarding the immediate need to find stable housing solutions for survivors of the Hurricane Maria who have evacuated Puerto Rico to the mainland and are unable to return home.

As you know, FEMA has refused to stand up the Disaster Housing Assistance Program (DHAP), leaving hundreds of Puerto Rican evacuees across the country – including 145 families in Massachusetts – at risk of homelessness when the Transitional Shelter Assistance program ends on June 30. Many of these families don't have anywhere to turn for help.

The Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) funds programs that could provide housing assistance to these families, but most of these in Massachusetts and around the country are oversubscribed and have waiting lists that are years – or even decades – long. HUD's programs designed to prevent homelessness may also be able to help the evacuees, but these are often difficult to find.

When FEMA established DHAP in partnership with HUD after previous disasters, evacuees had access to HUD professionals who worked full time in the local community at public housing authorities to help find the support they needed – whether through disaster assistance or not. It is this special expertise that led a President George W. Bush-era report examining the response to Hurricane Katrina to conclude that HUD “with extensive expertise and perspective in large-scale housing challenges and its nation-wide relationships with State public housing authorities,” should lead the effort to plan for the temporary and long-term housing needs of disaster evacuees.¹ The 2009 National Disaster Housing Strategy similarly recommended that Congress pass legislation “that enables HUD to stand ready and quickly mobilize its network of PHAs to

¹ White House, “The Federal Response to Hurricane Katrina: Lessons Learned,” February 2006, pp. 60, <https://permanent.access.gpo.gov/lps67263/katrina-lessons-learned.pdf>

administer an interim tenant-based rental assistance program for households displaced from their homes by disasters.”²

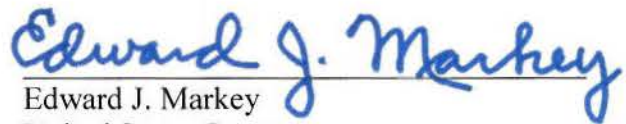
Without access to the expertise of the public housing authority personnel, many survivors and those trying to help them -- including our staffs -- are left to contact service providers one at a time on an *ad hoc* basis. To help us better serve our constituents, we ask you to provide a list of available HUD housing assistance or homelessness prevention programs for which evacuees may be eligible. Please indicate whether the programs have a waiting list, provide a list of or link to their eligibility requirements, and provide a description of their application processes. To the extent these programs are administered as grant programs to local governments or non-governmental organizations, please list the recipients of the grants.

In order to help us provide services to our constituents before their temporary assistance runs out, please provide the requested information no later than June 26, 2018.

Sincerely,



Elizabeth Warren
United States Senator



Edward J. Markey
United States Senator

² Federal Emergency Management Agency, “National Disaster Housing Strategy,” January 16, 2009, pp. 17
https://www.fema.gov/media-library-data/20130726-1819-25045-9288/ndhs_core.pdf