

**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.<sup>1</sup> 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.<sup>2</sup> 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."<sup>3</sup> 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.

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<sup>1</sup> 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>.

<sup>2</sup> 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>.

<sup>3</sup> 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](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.

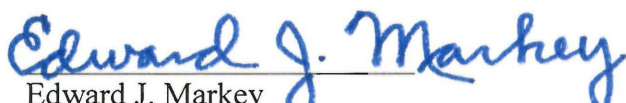
Sincerely,



Elizabeth Warren  
United States Senator



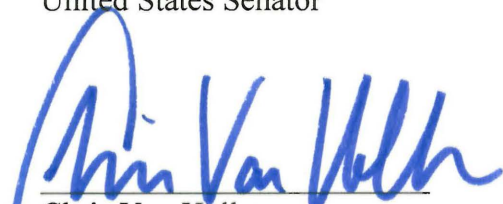
Nydia M. Velázquez  
Member of Congress



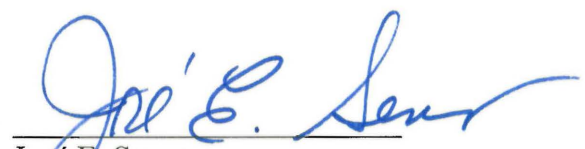
Edward J. Markey  
United States Senator



Katherine Clark  
Member of Congress

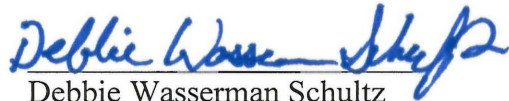


Chris Van Hollen  
United States Senator

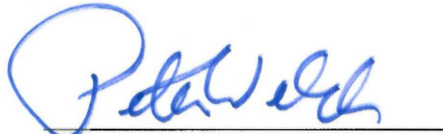



José E. Serrano  
Member of Congress




  
Debbie Wasserman Schultz  
Member of Congress

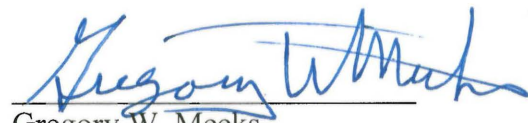
  
Bennie Thompson  
Member of Congress


  
Peter Welch  
Member of Congress


  
Frank Pallone, Jr.  
Member of Congress


  
Eliot L. Engel  
Member of Congress


  
Ted Deutch  
Member of Congress

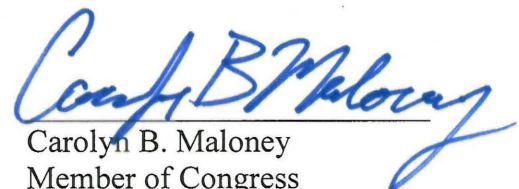
  
Gregory W. Meeks  
Member of Congress

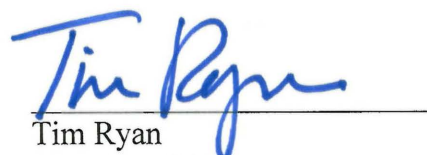
  
Eleanor Holmes Norton  
Member of Congress


  
Robert A. Brady  
Member of Congress

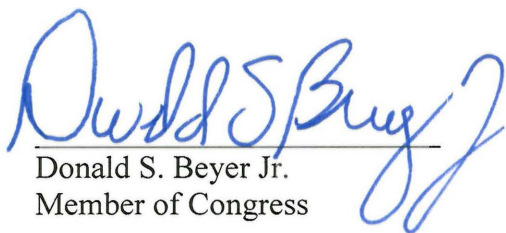
  
Bonnie Watson Coleman  
Member of Congress

  
Brian Higgins  
Member of Congress

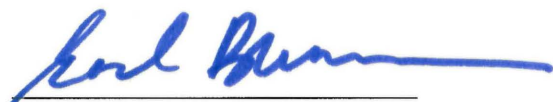
  
Carolyn B. Maloney  
Member of Congress

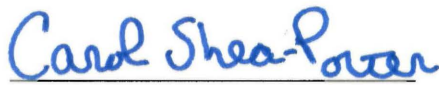
  
Tim Ryan  
Member of Congress

  
Mike Quigley  
Member of Congress

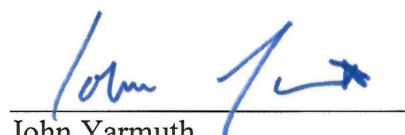
  
Donald S. Beyer Jr.  
Member of Congress

  
Grace F. Napolitano  
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Earl Blumenauer  
Member of Congress

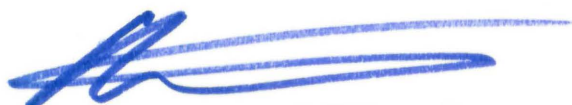
  
Carol Shea-Porter  
Member of Congress

  
Zoe Lofgren  
Member of Congress

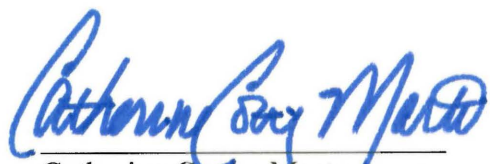
  
John Yarmuth  
Member of Congress

  
Luis V. Gutiérrez  
Member of Congress


  
Ruben Gallego  
Member of Congress

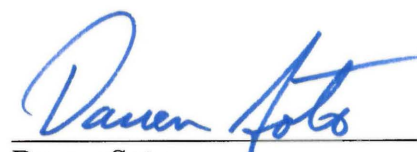
  
Adriano Espaillat  
Member of Congress

  
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



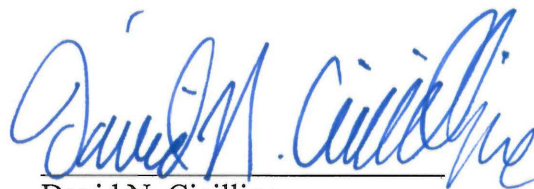
Ruben J. Kihuen  
Member of Congress



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



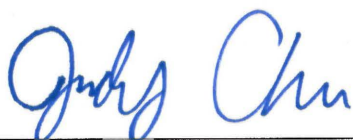
Stephen F. Lynch  
Member of Congress



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

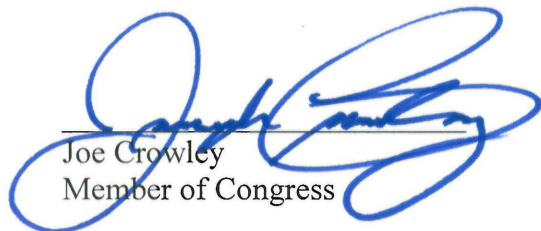
  
Lucille Roybal-Allard  
Member of Congress


  
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

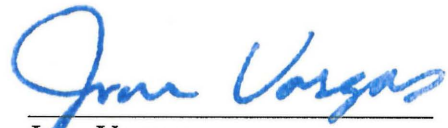
  
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United States Senator

  
Joaquin Castro  
Member of Congress

  
Richard E. Neal  
Member of Congress



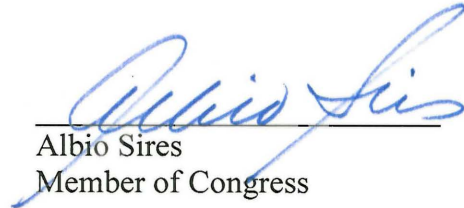
Val Butler Demings  
Member of Congress



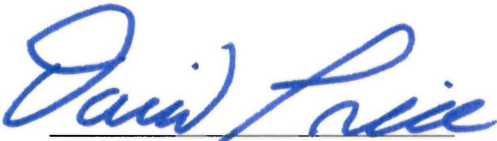
Juan Vargas  
Member of Congress



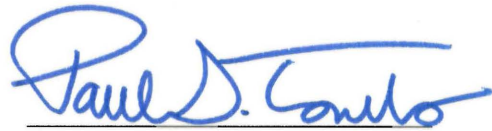
Kathleen M. Rice  
Member of Congress



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



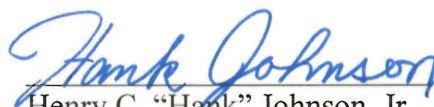
Eddie Bernice Johnson  
Member of Congress



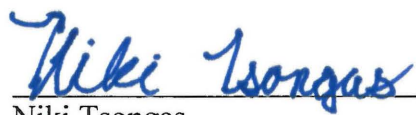
Yvette D. Clarke  
Member of Congress



Mark Pocan  
Member of Congress



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



Niki Tsongas  
Member of Congress



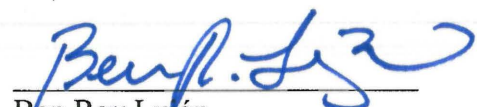
Donald M. Payne, Jr.  
Member of Congress



Kirsten Gillibrand  
United States Senator



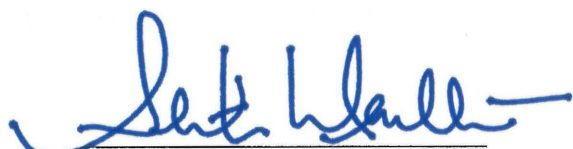
Brendan F. Boyle  
Member of Congress



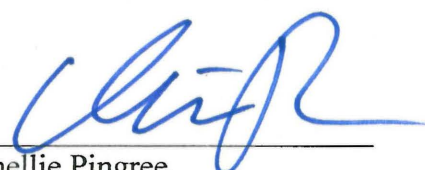
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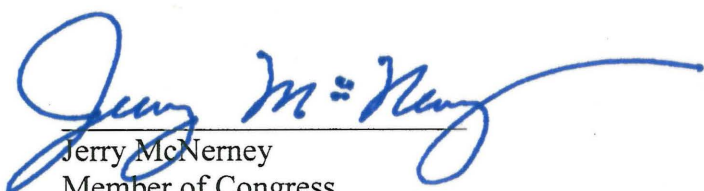
James R. Langevin  
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Seth Moulton  
Member of Congress



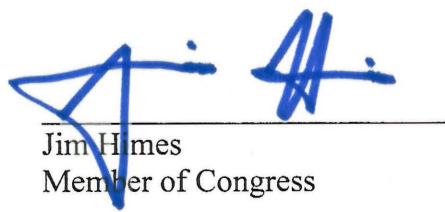
Chellie Pingree  
Member of Congress



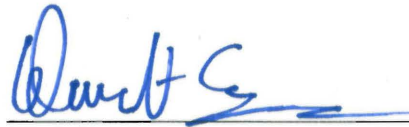
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Member of Congress



Betty McCollum  
Member of Congress



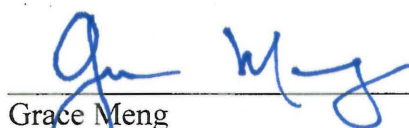
Jim Himes  
Member of Congress



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

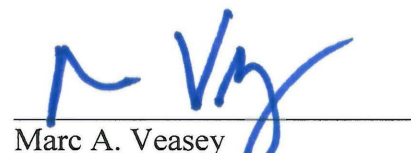
  
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Member of Congress


  
Mark DeSaulnier  
Member of Congress

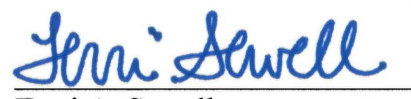
  
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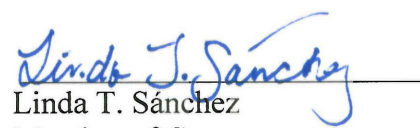
  
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Member of Congress


  
André Carson  
Member of Congress

  
Marc A. Veasey  
Member of Congress

  
Adam Smith  
Member of Congress

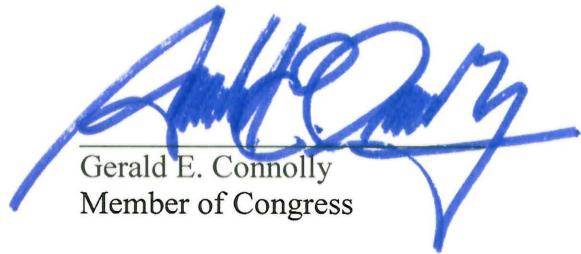
  
Terri A. Sewell  
Member of Congress

  
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



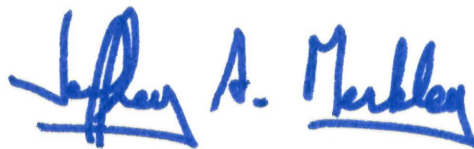
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Member of Congress



J. Luis Correa  
Member of Congress



Benjamin L. Cardin  
United States Senator



Jeffrey A. Merkley  
United States Senator



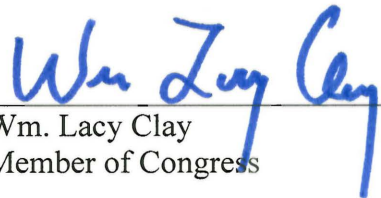
Danny K. Davis  
Member of Congress



Tammy Duckworth  
United States Senator



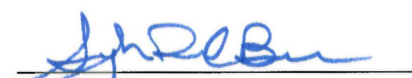
Richard Blumenthal  
United States Senator



Wm. Lacy Clay  
Member of Congress



Robert Menendez  
United States Senator



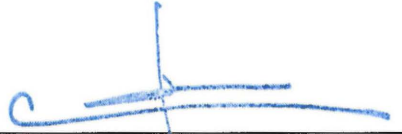
Suzan K. DelBene  
Member of Congress



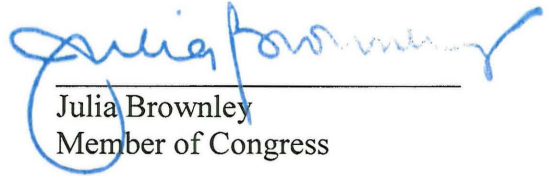
Elijah E. Cummings  
Member of Congress



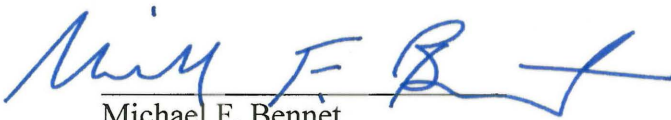
Robin Kelly  
Member of Congress



Colleen Hanabusa  
Member of Congress



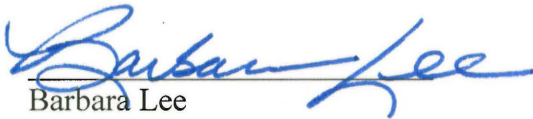
Julia Brownley  
Member of Congress



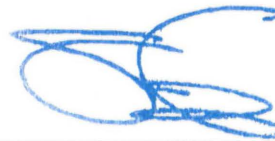
Michael F. Bennet  
United States Senator



Raúl M. Grijalva  
Member of Congress



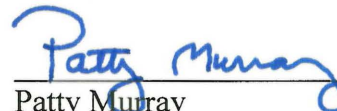
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Member of Congress



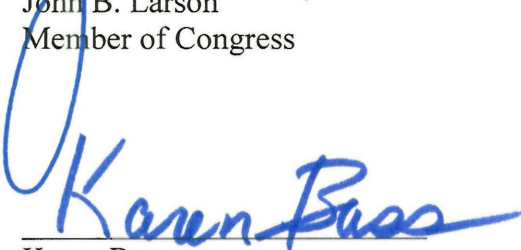
Sean Patrick Maloney  
Member of Congress



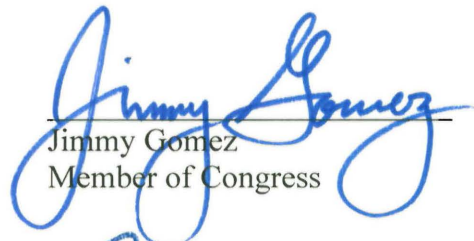
John B. Larson  
Member of Congress



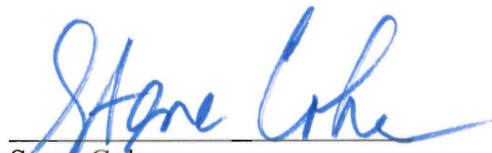
Patty Murray  
United States Senator



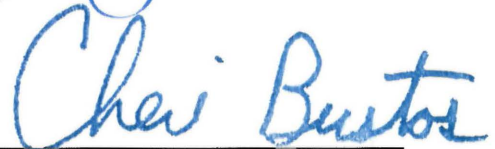
Karen Bass  
Member of Congress



Jimmy Gomez  
Member of Congress



Steve Cohen  
Member of Congress



Cheri Bustos  
Member of Congress