

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

February 13, 2018

The Honorable William B. Long
Administrator
Federal Emergency Management Agency
500 C Street S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20472

Dear Administrator Long:

We write to request that the Federal Emergency Management Agency (“FEMA”) expand the Direct Lease program to include states hosting Hurricane Maria evacuees, and that it extend the Transitional Shelter Assistance (“TSA”) program to June 1, 2018 for evacuees currently residing in New York. As a host state, New York has received hundreds¹ of families from Puerto Rico. Unfortunately, about 200 impacted households have been alerted that FEMA would stop paying for their rooms as early as tomorrow, Wednesday, February 14,² making this an urgent matter that requires your immediate action.

Numerous government officials from the local, state, and federal levels have urged FEMA to expand the Direct Lease program to cover host states,³ and to extend the TSA program.⁴ We echo those calls because Hurricane Maria survivors, regardless of where they have relocated, continue to need this critical lifeline. If the scope and duration of these programs are not extended, the thousands of Puerto Rican individuals and families who currently rely on them for survival will only be made to suffer more than they already have. In particular, survivors with disabilities that are dependent on reliable electricity will face severe challenges. The recent explosion of a power substation that caused massive power blackouts⁵ is a clear example of why many evacuees cannot return home, and thus, why these programs must be extended. It is our understanding that Hurricane Maria survivors should be eligible to receive assistance through the end of the school year in order to prevent further disruption to the education of survivors who have been forced to resume their schooling on the mainland.

¹ <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/02/12/nyregion/puerto-rican-hotels-fema-hurricane-maria.html> (accessed February 12, 2018).

² *Id.*

³ *See, e.g.,*

<https://soto.house.gov/sites/soto.house.gov/files/documents/FINAL%2012.20.17%20Rep.%20Soto%20Letter%20to%20FEMA.pdf> (accessed February 12, 2018).

⁴ <http://www.orlandosentinel.com/news/breaking-news/os-fema-tsa-program-puerto-rican-evacuees-20180207-story.html> (accessed February 12, 2018).

⁵ <https://www.nbcnews.com/storyline/puerto-rico-crisis/blackout-hits-northern-puerto-rico-following-fire-explosion-n847031> (accessed February 13, 2018).

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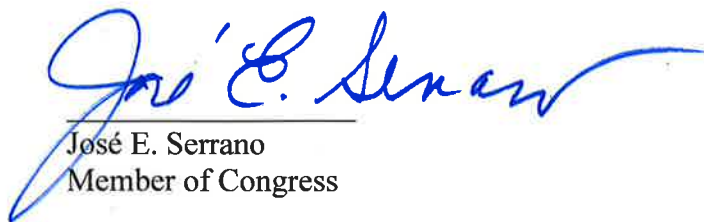
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Survivors of Hurricane Maria in New York need housing, and the State of New York needs assistance to continue supporting survivors in this critical time. Therefore, we respectfully request that FEMA approve the Direct Lease program for Puerto Rican survivors in New York, and extend the TSA program to June 1, 2018.

Sincerely,



Nydia M. Velázquez
Member of Congress



José E. Serrano
Member of Congress