

May 22, 2018

The Honorable Brock Long
Administrator
Federal Emergency Management Agency
500 C Street SW
Washington DC 20472

Dear Administrator Long:

On behalf of the Disaster Housing Recovery Coalition and its members, I write to request a meeting with you to discuss the Federal Emergency Management Agency's (FEMA) wholly unacceptable response to the longer-term housing needs of low income survivors displaced by the 2017 hurricanes and wildfires. In particular, we would like to discuss FEMA's [rejection](#) on May 15, 2018 of a request for the Disaster Housing Assistance Program (DHAP) made in December 2017 by Puerto Rico Governor Ricardo Rossello to ensure that all displaced families have a safe, accessible, and affordable place to live while they get back on their feet.

The Disaster Housing Recovery Coalition is led by the National Low Income Housing Coalition and includes more than 700 national, state, and local organizations, including many organizations working directly with disaster-impacted communities and with first-hand experience recovering after disasters. We work to ensure that federal disaster recovery efforts reach all impacted households, including those with the lowest incomes who are often the hardest-hit by disasters and have the fewest resources to recover afterwards.

Since the first hurricanes made landfall, FEMA has continued to refuse to work with the HUD to stand up DHAP, a proven solution to this ongoing housing crisis. For more than eight months, FEMA officials informed us, as well as other advocates and Congressional offices that the agency was unable to take steps to implement DHAP because the program had not been requested by a Governor of an impacted state or territory. As outlined in a letter dated May 15, 2018, however, FEMA [rejected a formal request](#) made five months prior in December 2017 by the Governor of Puerto Rico for DHAP to serve displaced families in critical need of housing assistance. FEMA's misleading statements on DHAP and its refusal to use this proven solution are unacceptable.

It is clear that the longer-term housing needs of displaced families are not a priority for FEMA. As a result of FEMA's negligent inaction, more than four thousand families remain in cramped hotel rooms through the Transitional Shelter Assistance (TSA) program and thousands more have been unable to access TSA hotels and state-administered disaster housing programs having instead to move into uninhabitable or overcrowded homes, to sleep at shelters, or to pay far too much of their limited incomes on rent, making it harder to meet their other basic needs. These precarious housing situations put the lowest income families at increased risk of evictions and, in worst cases, homelessness.

FEMA's refusal to implement DHAP also ignores the program's successful track record after Hurricanes Katrina, Rita, Gustav, and Ike and Superstorm Sandy, especially its ability to serve individuals and families who have the greatest needs – including low income seniors, people with disabilities, families with children, veterans, people experiencing homelessness, and others – who face significant barriers to using other disaster housing assistance programs.

I would like the opportunity to bring our partners who are working locally to address this FEMA-made housing disaster to discuss immediate steps FEMA should take to help mitigate the harm it has caused and to prepare for the housing needs that will result from the next disaster. NLIHC staff will reach out to your office to schedule a meeting as soon as possible.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Diane Yentel".

Diane Yentel
President and CEO
National Low Income Housing Coalition