



January 17, 2018

Mr. Charles Smith
Executive Commissioner
Texas Health & Human Services
4900 North Lamar
Austin, Texas 78711

Commissioner Smith,

First, our deepest gratitude for the tireless work of your team here on the ground and in Austin in response to Hurricane Harvey. As the long road to full recovery continues, the mission and work of Texas Health and Human Services in collaboration with local partners in Harris County/Houston is one of the most important to the lives of those most greatly impacted. Disaster case management is chief among the services that are vital to rebuilding lives in the wake of the nation's most costly natural disaster.

It is for that reason that we write jointly to express grave concerns about the path forward to provide long term disaster case management in southeast Texas. While the program has evolved in a way that is innovative and forward-thinking in recent years, it is some of those developments that have created potential hurdles to how we might best effectively integrate the state mission with local priorities. In particular, we are concerned that the lack of a local vendor to provide long term disaster case management services would inhibit full adoption of three key local priorities; building long term disaster case management capacity, seamless service to those already in the case management system, and the utilization of trusted local organizations that have successfully been at the forefront of disaster case management in our community.

There are more than 100 organizations that are currently a part of the Harris County Long Term Recovery Committee. They are intrinsically woven into our community. The recovery partners and collaborative effort have a "disaster mindset" due to the five presidentially declared disasters we have had over the past three years. Because of this, our residents are familiar with the processes and procedures necessary

to recover. This includes those local organizations which have been with our residents from the beginning, doing whatever is in their power to help our community recover.

We have tried unsuccessfully to engage in this dialogue with management in your organization. Since November, we have repeatedly made requests to visit with the appropriate representatives of Texas Health and Human Services. As of now, we continue to wait while the clock is running, our residents are in dire need and local non-profit partners are overwhelmed.

It is our hope that you will agree to a meeting with representatives of the Harris County Judge and the Mayor of Houston to address these critical concerns at your earliest convenience. The purpose of the meeting would be to explore, in a collaborative way, the following:

- A timeline and process for delivery of long-term disaster case management funds
- Integration of local organizations and priorities into state efforts
- Identify what works well with the current process and opportunities for improvement in future disasters
- How we can mutually support each other to help those most affected by Hurricane Harvey

Again, we believe that we can work together to meet the critical needs of Harris County/Houston residents. However, to do that we must coordinate and communicate. Our hope is that you will agree to be engaged in this process to ensure that the forthcoming efforts will be successful rather than a strain on the current system.

A meeting with Harris County and Houston officials representing our respective offices can be coordinated through Francisco Sanchez (Francisco.Sanchez@oem.hctx.net) and Niel Golightly (Niel.Golightly@houstontx.gov). Or, Francisco can be reached at 713-426-9577 and Niel at 832-337-2325.

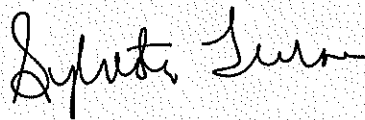
We look forward to a response soon and are optimistic that through better communication we can ensure the response to Harvey meets the needs of our residents.

Respectfully,



Ed Emmett
Harris County Judge

1001 Preston, Suite 911
Houston, Texas 77002



Sylvester Turner
Houston Mayor

901 Bagby St
Houston, TX 77002