



# The Legislature State of Texas

October 18, 2019

The Honorable George P. Bush  
Commissioner  
Texas General Land Office  
P.O. Box 12873  
Austin, TX 78711-2873

Dear Commissioner Bush,

Recovery across our region depends on a strong partnership between local, state, and federal officials. We appreciate the spirit of cooperation and shared responsibility that resulted in the March 2018 agreement on the allocation of housing funds among the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), the Texas General Land Office (GLO), and the City of Houston and Harris County.

As representatives of Houston's diverse communities and advocates for a strong and speedy recovery from Hurricane Harvey, we want to see more of this kind of cooperation to reduce red tape and speed up recovery for all who were affected by Hurricane Harvey.

In that spirit, we are concerned to see the challenges in reaching a reasonable resolution on the issue of the number of bedrooms that will be rebuilt for homeowners in Houston and Harris County with much-needed federal recovery funds. The lack of formal guidance from HUD, combined with GLO's efforts to remain in compliance with federal regulations in order to avoid the possibility of funds being clawed back, has created a set of circumstances which is causing concern amongst homeowners who fear that they will not be made whole in the rebuilding process.

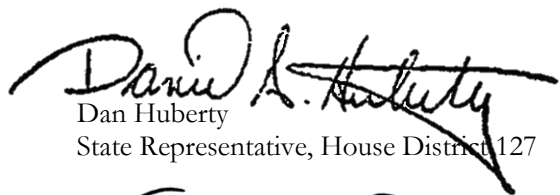
As the GLO continues to work with local partners in the rebuilding process, equal consideration must be given to compliance with federal rules and the consequences of failing to rebuild homes to their previous footprint. Of course, homeowners who have lived in homes with more than two bedrooms for many years would want to retain the value of that precious asset, even as they may need significant federal help to reconstruct their homes. Furthermore, the future young families who will inherit or buy these homes will need more than two-bedrooms. By replacing large numbers of three- or four-bedroom homes with two-bedroom homes, the policy will have the unintended effect of depressing property values across those neighborhoods.

As you have maintained in your prior correspondence with local and state partners, the GLO is willing and able to grant waivers to housing guidelines on a case by case basis. We ask that your agency provide full support and guidance to homeowners who are seeking waivers and that thorough consideration be given to each set of unique circumstances. Through a cooperative partnership, we trust that homeowners who truly need a waiver can be granted one while still protecting the state's interest in not having funds clawed back at a later date.


The State, City, and County should be able to work out a reasonable resolution to this issue without political fanfare. As it has been in the past, HUD can be an important partner in achieving resolution and reestablishing the productive dynamic between the state and local jurisdictions.

We encourage staff from the State, the City of Houston, and Harris County to once again visit with HUD officials in Washington to ensure a smooth working relationship and deliver a sound recovery for our region. We look forward to receiving updates from you as these conversations continue.


Sincerely,

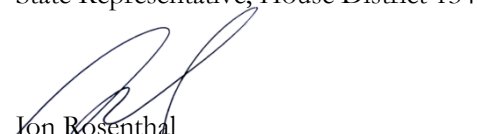
  
Dan Huberty  
State Representative, House District 127

  
Alma Allen  
State Representative, House District 131

  
Gina Calanni  
State Representative, House District 132

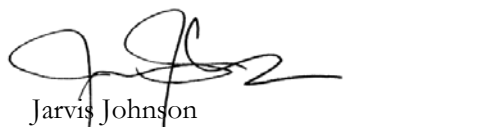
  
Jim Murphy  
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Sarah Davis  
State Representative, House District 134

  
Jon Rosenthal  
State Representative, House District 135


  
Gene Wu  
State Representative, House District 137

  
Dwayne Bohac  
State Representative, House District 138


  
Jarvis Johnson  
State Representative, House District 139

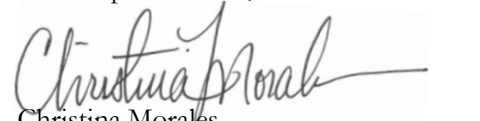
  
Armando Walle  
State Representative, House District 140

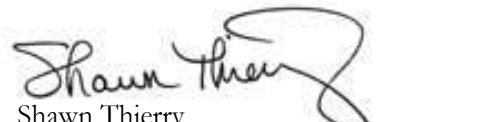
  
Senfroya Thompson  
State Representative, House District 141


  
Harold Dutton  
State Representative, House District 142


  
Ana Hernandez  
State Representative, House District 143

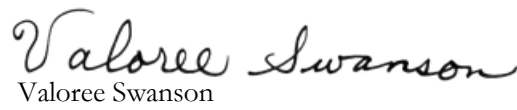
  
Mary Ann Perez  
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Christina Morales  
State Representative, House District 145

  
Shawn Thierry  
State Representative, House District 146

  
Garnet Coleman  
State Representative, House District 147

  
Hubert Vo  
State Representative, House District 149

  
Valoree Swanson  
State Representative, House District 150

CC: The Honorable Lina Hidalgo, Judge, Harris County  
The Honorable Sylvester Turner, Mayor, City of Houston  
David Woll, Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary, Office of Community Planning and Development,  
U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development