

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20510

September 21, 2017

The Honorable Ben Carson
Secretary
U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development
451 7th Street S.W.
Washington, DC 20410

Dear Secretary Carson:

We write today to request that the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), in coordination with the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and the Small Business Administration (SBA), expeditiously allocate the \$7.4 billion in Community Development Block Grant Disaster Relief (CDBG-DR) funds appropriated by H.R. 601, the Continuing Appropriations Act of 2018. We also ask that HUD, as quickly as possible thereafter, issue the notice providing clarifying guidance, waivers and alternative requirements for these CDBG-DR funds, so that the State of Texas may begin to use this federal aid and accelerate the recovery process.

As you know, estimates and figures from Hurricane Harvey continue to roll in and are quickly revealing that this Hurricane will likely be the most expensive storm in our nation's history. Hurricane Harvey drenched the State of Texas, with certain areas receiving over fifty inches of rainfall. Early estimates from the University of Texas put the number of homes affected by the storm at 1.2 million, and as many as one million vehicles were destroyed. The sheer scale of Americans displaced from their homes is unlike anything our country has ever seen.

In response to this catastrophic event, Congress moved on H.R. 601 with a high sense of urgency, in an effort to make sure that the State of Texas and local governments received aid as quickly as possible. Unfortunately, Congress' quick action can easily be undone by unnecessary delays at the agency level. In order to ensure this does not occur, we request that HUD consider the following actions:

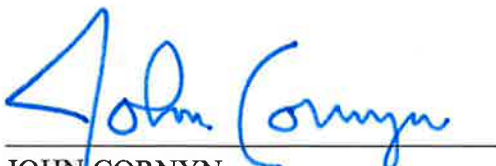
- **Allocate the CDBG-DR Funds that Congress Intended for Harvey Immediately:** Our constituents in Texas have been suffering from the consequences of Hurricane Harvey for nearly a month. The State of Texas and local governments are eager to begin the rebuilding and recovery process. While it is possible that Congress may take action on another disaster supplemental in the future, it is important the funds appropriated in H.R. 601 be disbursed as soon as possible.
- **Lower the Requirement for Benefit to Low to Moderate Income:** The Housing and Community Development Act statutes governing CDBG dollars require that 70% of all

expenditures benefit Low to Moderate Income (LMI) persons. As you know, the HUD Secretary is granted the authority with CDBG-DR funds to waive the 70% requirement and lower the threshold to 50%. We respectfully request that you use this authority and decrease the percentage requirement for LMI as to give the grantees maximum flexibility.

- **Authorize Maximum Flexibility for Grantees:** In the past, accompanying guidance for CDBG-DR allocations has specified percentages of funds that may be spent on housing, infrastructure or mitigation measures. To ensure the fullest possible recovery and resiliency, grantees must be given the broadest flexibility to spend appropriated dollars not just on housing, but on the infrastructure necessary to defend against future catastrophic events. Arbitrary percentages and requirements are a major setback to the recovery process. While some restrictions are necessary, overburdensome restrictions stifle the ability of the state and local governments to apply funds to areas efficiently and realize the most benefit to long-term recovery. We firmly believe that the state and local authorities are in the best position to make such determinations.
- **Limit the Comment Period:** Typically, HUD provides a thirty-day window to solicit public comments for disaster appropriations. Given the magnitude of Harvey and the number of lives disrupted and lost by this event, a thirty-day comment period is simply too long. We request that HUD consider shortening the comment period from thirty days to seven days.

Thank you for your agency's efforts on behalf of the people of Texas and for your prompt consideration of these requests. We trust that HUD will give full consideration to the intent of Congress' in appropriating these CDBG-DR funds and avoid burdensome artificial restrictions. If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact Madison Smith in Senator Cornyn's office at (202) 224-2934.

Respectfully,



JOHN CORNYN
United States Senator



TED CRUZ
United States Senator



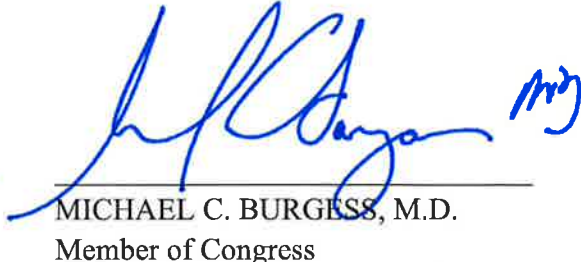
BRIAN BABIN, D.D.S.
Member of Congress



JOE BARTON
Member of Congress



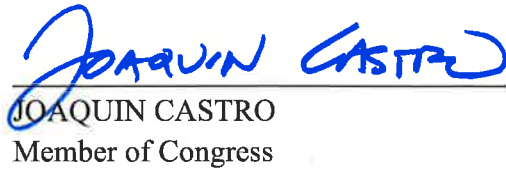
KEVIN BRADY
Member of Congress



MICHAEL C. BURGESS, M.D.
Member of Congress



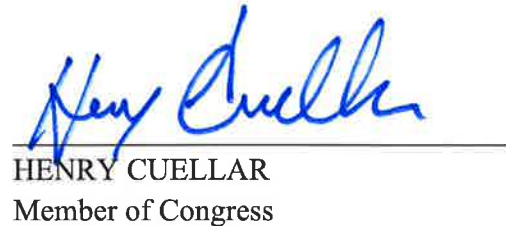
JOHN CARTER
Member of Congress



JOAQUIN CASTRO
Member of Congress



K. MICHAEL CONAWAY
Member of Congress



HENRY CUELLAR
Member of Congress



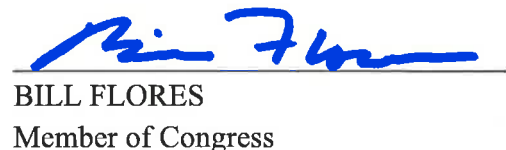
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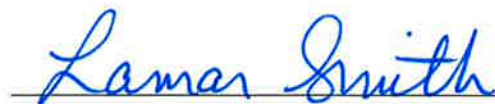
TED POE
Member of Congress



JOHN RATCLIFFE
Member of Congress



PETE SESSIONS
Member of Congress



LAMAR SMITH
Member of Congress



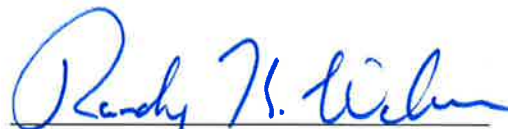
MAC THORNBERRY
Member of Congress



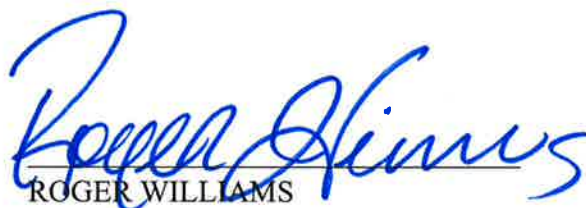
MARC VEASEY
Member of Congress



FILEMON VELA
Member of Congress



RANDY WEBER
Member of Congress



ROGER WILLIAMS
Member of Congress



KENNY MARCHANT
Member of Congress