



CITY OF HOUSTON

Sylvester Turner

Mayor

P.O. Box 1562
Houston, Texas 77251-1562

Telephone – Dial 311
www.houstontx.gov

September 4, 2017

The Honorable Governor Greg Abbott
Governor of the State of Texas
Office of the Governor
State Insurance Building
1100 San Jacinto
Austin, Texas 78701

Re: Texas Hurricane Harvey (DR-4332-TX)

Dear Governor Abbott:

Thank you for your assistance and the support that Chief Nim Kidd and his team have already provided to the City of Houston (COH) during the devastating aftermath of Hurricane Harvey (DR-4332-TX). This event necessitates the COH to send this letter as a request for immediate financial assistance from the federal/state government. As you know, we are no stranger to disasters and Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) programs, however, this unprecedented event has put an extreme economic strain on the City and its residents. As the fourth largest city in the United States and a primary economic engine for Texas and the nation, Houston must be allocated the tools needed for a swift and effective recovery.

The City has the technical expertise and human resources to execute an expeditious recovery. Under my administration, we have also proven to be effective stewards of the resources allocated to us in recent disasters, namely the 2015 and 2016 flood events; we need financial support to help our City recover and become more resilient. The current priorities of the City are as follows:

1. Ensuring the ***immediate public health & safety*** of the residents in City of Houston.
2. Providing support for the ***households and individuals impacted*** that have been displaced due directly to Hurricane Harvey.
3. Securing funding to respond to the catastrophic financial strain on our ***infrastructure, with damages estimated at more than \$5 Billion.***

The COH appreciates the decisions made, responsiveness and substantive actions already taken by FEMA with the approval of 90% federal reimbursement for Category A (debris removal) and 100% for Category B (emergency protective measures) for the first 30 days of our recovery. Based on current needs, the City is requesting that the leadership within the State of Texas and the Federal Congressional delegation support the additional following requests to FEMA:

- Advance funding for the Public Assistance program (all categories of work).
 - We are seeking initial advance funding of \$300 million of which \$100 million will be used for immediate debris removal.
 - As we get more accurate damage assessment estimates, our goal is to secure additional advance funding for emergency and permanent repairs.
- At least 15-20 Disaster Recovery Centers (DRC) adequately staffed throughout the City of Houston to expedite assistance to individuals.
 - Deploy 4-5 DRCs for each quadrant of the City.
 - Provide adequate staffing to ensure that disaster survivors are promptly assisted.
- 100% advance funding and expedited processing for First Responders who lost property in the line of duty.
 - The City of Houston wishes to establish a pilot program for assisting the estimated 100 Houston Fire Department and 200 Houston Police Department personnel who had significant damage to their homes and losses due to Hurricane Harvey. Many of these First Responders are not insured.
 - It is our goal to establish a fund to assist the First Responders and seek your support for this endeavor.
 - The COH is taking additional steps for not only First Responders but also for support personnel (municipal employees) who were impacted.
- Provide financial assistance to the City of Houston in the largest amount authorized for the execution of Shelter in Place/Rapid Re-housing to expedite the return of families to their homes and contribute to a whole community recovery. This program would help eliminate the need for FEMA to establish a costly temporary shelter program of mobile housing units.
- Increase the small project threshold from \$123,100 to \$246,200 (two (2) times the current threshold), which would ease the administrative and audit burden to the City, State and FEMA as well as allow for funds to flow faster to the City for an expedited recovery.

As we continue to work three other open disasters (Hurricane Ike (DR-1791-TX), 2015 Floods (DR-4223-TX), and 2016 Floods (DR-4269-TX), the City's cash flow position is facing unprecedented strain. Last week, City Council appropriated the entire \$20 million in the City's Budget Stabilization (Rainy Day) fund, but this funding will be quickly exhausted. The City respectfully requests the following actions by the State of Texas:

- Provide \$60 million in state relief emergency funds through the Governor's Disaster Relief Fund, as amended by Senate Bill 2 in the 85th Legislative Session, as a temporary source of funding until the federal funds are received.
- Commit to allocating 30% of the FEMA 404 Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP) funds from this disaster (DR-4332-TX) to the City of Houston.
- Reduce the Texas Division of Emergency Management's (TDEM) Section 324 management costs to 2% for this event. We request that the State forego 1.34% in order to maximize funding for the direct benefit of those in need.
- Prioritize Texas Water Development Board (TWDB) State Revolving Funding (SRF) assistance to the City of Houston for recovery projects.
- Request FEMA to immediately allocate funding for a Shelter in Place/Rapid Re-housing Home Program in Houston. Allow the City to implement and administer this program to allow for maximum speed of implementation for this critical item.

The City is also requesting the support of our congressional delegation and senators to support the following:

- Act quickly to pass the Hurricane Harvey Act which would replenish the Disaster Relief Fund and provide additional funding for other programs supporting Harvey recovery.
- Appropriate an initial amount of \$4 billion of HUD CDBG-DR funds as a direct allocation to the City of Houston to address unmet needs within the community as was done after Hurricane Sandy.

The City of Houston is facing a daunting task as we move into recovery and needs full support from our State and Federal partners. We are prepared to act swiftly in the best interest of our residents and continue to be good stewards of the federal funds allocated to the rebuilding process. While this disaster is unprecedented in scale, we know that you, Chief Kidd, and the staff of the Texas Division of Emergency Management will be there for Houston and its residents. Your support and assistance will allow the City of Houston to immediately start the process of its long recovery.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Sylvester Turner', written in a cursive style.

Mayor Sylvester Turner

Cc: Senator John Cornyn
Senator Ted Cruz
Congressman Kevin Brady
Congressman John Culberson
Congressman Louie Gohmert
Congressman Al Green
Congressman Gene Green
Congresswoman Sheila Jackson Lee
Congressman Pete Olson
Congressman Ted Poe
Congressman Lamar S. Smith
Congressman Roger Williams
Harris County State Delegation
Chief Nim Kidd, DPS, TDEM, Assistant Director
Sandra Fulenwider, DPS, TDEM, Deputy Assistant Director
Kevin Hannes, FEMA, Federal Coordinating Officer
Tony Robinson, FEMA, Region 6
Sherry Copeland, TDEM, Section Administrator Recover/Houston
Melinda Dunn, Program Specialist, Region 6