

United States Senate
WASHINGTON, DC 20510

January 14, 2020

The Honorable Donald J. Trump
President of the United States
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear President Trump:

We write in strong support of Puerto Rico's request for a major disaster declaration for the widespread damage caused by the powerful 6.4-magnitude earthquake on January 7, and the hundreds of preceding and subsequent aftershocks which struck the island starting late on December 28. Enclosed is a copy of the governor's request.

More than two days after the 6.4-magnitude event, more than one million of our fellow Americans in Puerto Rico were still without power. Eight landslides had been recorded, over 2,000 individuals were in shelters including 125 minors, and the island's communication's grid was only 75 percent operational. Many schools have been closed indefinitely and will only be reopened upon inspection. The earthquake tragically claimed the life of a 73-year-old man in the southern city of Ponce and many more were injured. The Costa Sur power generation plant – the largest on Puerto Rico's grid – sustained damage so severe that the Island will need 500 megawatts of emergency generation for the rest of the year. Clearly, the situation in Puerto Rico is dire.

Reflecting the island-wide damage from these earthquakes, Governor Wanda Vázquez Garced has requested that you declare a major disaster in Puerto Rico on January 11, 2020, pursuant to the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act (P.L. 93-288). Specifically, the governor has requested Individual Assistance for the municipalities of Guanica, Guayanilla, Penuelas, Ponce, Utuado, and Yauco; Public Assistance, including direct Federal assistance for the municipalities of Guanica, Guayanilla, Penuelas, Ponce, San German, and Yauco; and Hazard Mitigation for the entire commonwealth.

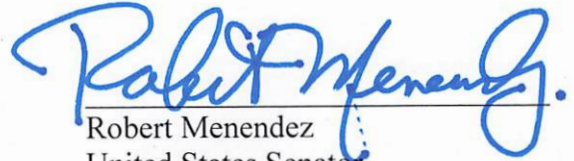
These earthquakes make it even more unconscionable the Department of Housing and Urban Development's (HUD) inaction in disbursing the \$8.3 billion in Community Development Block Grants for Disaster Recovery (CDBG-DR) funding appropriated by the United States Congress for mitigation projects in Puerto Rico. There is no substantive reason to withhold this congressionally-mandated disaster aid for our fellow Americans on the island, and indeed failure to disburse these funds has a damaging material impact on Puerto Rico and its residents. The bottom line is that this money must be made available to Puerto Rico now and failure to do so is in violation of Congress' explicit intent.

We appreciate your swift attention and consideration of this request and stand ready to work with your administration and the U.S. Federal Emergency Management Agency to deliver support and resources to the impacted communities.

Sincerely,



Charles E. Schumer
United States Senator



Robert Menendez
United States Senator



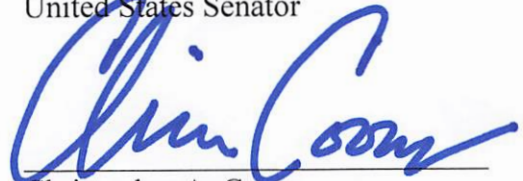
Kirsten Gillibrand
United States Senator



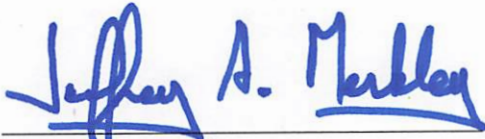
Gary C. Peters
United States Senator



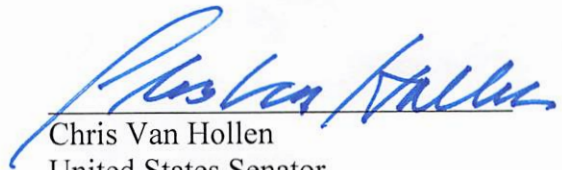
Kamala D. Harris
United States Senator



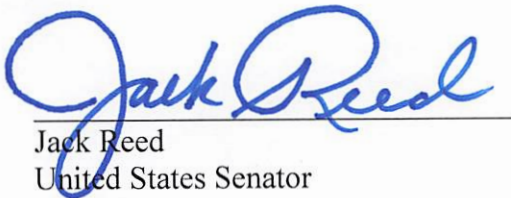
Christopher A. Coons
United States Senator



Jeffery A. Merkley
United States Senator



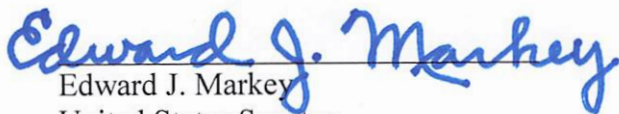
Chris Van Hollen
United States Senator



Jack Reed
United States Senator



Richard J. Durbin
United States Senator



Edward J. Markey
United States Senator



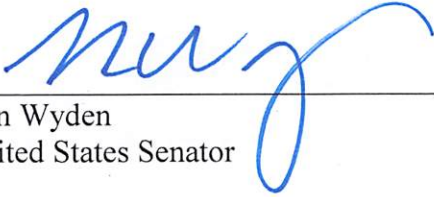
Tammy Duckworth
United States Senator



Richard Blumenthal
United States Senator



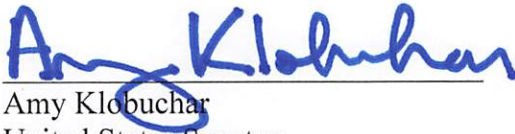
Elizabeth Warren
United States Senator



Ron Wyden
United States Senator



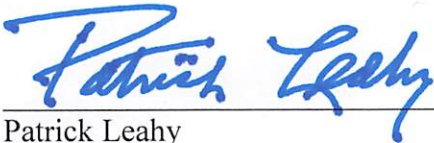
Catherine Cortez Masto
United States Senator



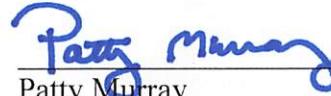
Amy Klobuchar
United States Senator



Tom Udall
United States Senator



Patrick Leahy
United States Senator



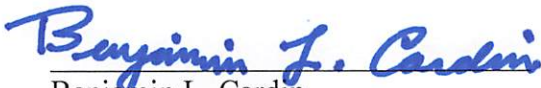
Patty Murray
United States Senator



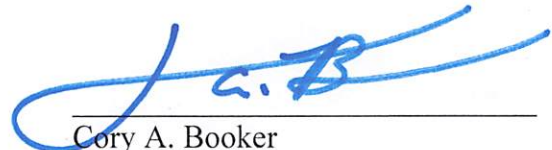
Thomas R. Carper
United States Senator



Bernard Sanders
United States Senator



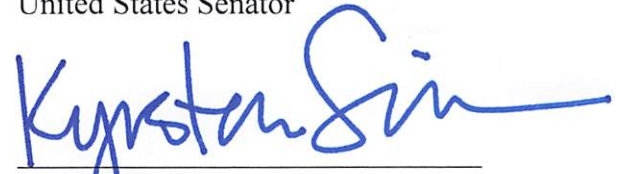
Benjamin L. Cardin
United States Senator



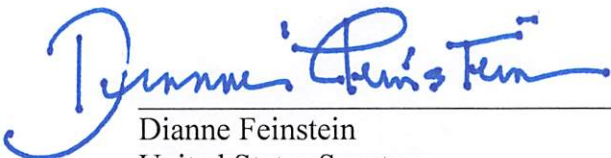
Cory A. Booker
United States Senator



Sherrod Brown
United States Senator



Kyrsten Sinema
United States Senator



Dianne Feinstein
United States Senator




Robert P. Casey, Jr.
United States Senator



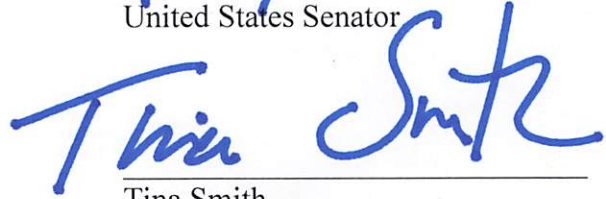
Sheldon Whitehouse
United States Senator



Tammy Baldwin
United States Senator



Mazie K. Hirono
United States Senator



Tina Smith
United States Senator



Christopher S. Murphy
United States Senator



Debbie Stabenow
United States Senator

CC: Peter Gaynor, Administrator of the US Federal Emergency Management Agency
Ben Carson, Secretary of US Department of Housing and Urban Development