

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

October 2, 2017

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

Dear President Trump:

We are writing to request that you take immediate action to assist Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands by waiving federal matching requirements for recovery programs and for permanent work assistance (Categories C-G) until both territories become more economically stable.

The Stafford Act enables the President to allocate federal disaster assistance available to territories. Both states and U.S. territories are required to share in the cost of the disaster assistance. However, in instances where a territory would be unduly burdened by a state match, that requirement may be amended or waived. We are grateful that you have decided to waive this matching requirement for Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands for 180 days, but we believe that more must be done.

As you know, in September 2017, Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands were hit by devastating storms, flooding the islands with feet of rain and ripping apart the islands' infrastructure. The tragic effects of hurricanes Irma and Maria left many of our fellow Americans without shelter, medical care, clean water, electricity, food, and other necessities. On islands that were already struggling with acute financial crises, the destruction caused by Hurricane Maria represents another setback. As Members of Congress, we believe it is our responsibility to ensure that the Federal Government promotes the economic prosperity of every community across the country. To that end, we are requesting a regulatory change that would provide necessary relief for an extended period, without financial strings attached, allowing the Puerto Rican and U.S. Virgin Island governments to preserve their already limited financial resources and help their communities recover.

The perilous economic conditions in Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands have already placed significant strain on both local governments' financial resources. Requiring cost-sharing during this critical time could take local resources away from providing the essential services many citizens need. We therefore urge the President to amend the disaster declaration for Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands so that their governments do not have to match public assistance grant funding tied to disaster aid, emergency repairs and/or restoration until Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands are at a point of economic stability.

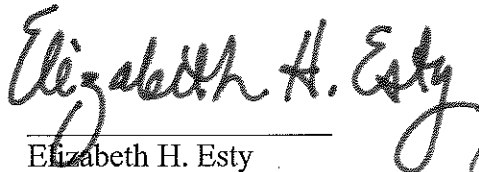
Our waiver request falls in line with the Department of Homeland Security's September 2, 2017 notice where President Trump amended the cost-sharing arrangements for the State of Texas

regarding public assistance grant funds provided under the authority of the Stafford Act. We are urging that the federal share of Puerto Rico's and the U.S. Virgin Islands' permanent work under the Stafford Act should be 100%. Hurricane Maria has taken a significant toll on Puerto Rico's and the U.S. Virgin Islands' infrastructure and residents. The federal government has the responsibility to ensure that all Americans have access to the relief they need. By granting this temporary waiver, you, Mr. President, and DHS can ensure we are doing everything we can to help American families in need.

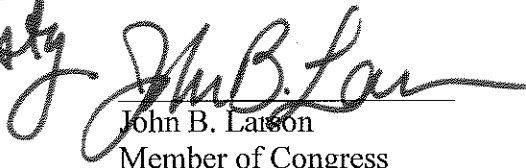
We look forward to working with you to ensure that the Island's needs are kept at the forefront of any disaster relief efforts.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter.

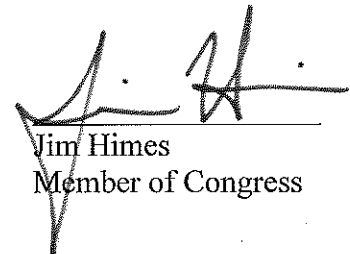
Sincerely,



Elizabeth H. Esty
Member of Congress




John B. Larson
Member of Congress



Jim Himes
Member of Congress



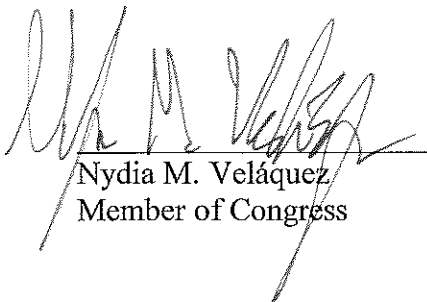
Richard Blumenthal
Member of Congress



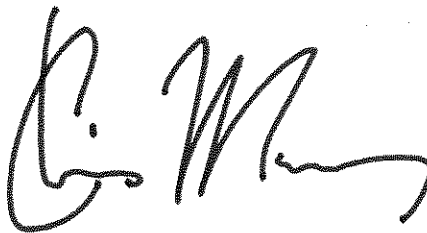
Rosa L. DeLauro
Member of Congress



Joe Courtney
Member of Congress



Nydia M. Velázquez
Member of Congress



Chris Murphy
Member of Congress