

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

September 21, 2022

President Joseph Biden
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear President Biden:

Thank you for swiftly declaring an emergency in Puerto Rico resulting from Hurricane Fiona,¹ and for acting swiftly to surge federal support to the island.² In light of the continued concerning news about the devastation the hurricane has wrought on the island, which has prompted Puerto Rico Governor Pedro Pierluisi to announce his request for a Major Disaster Declaration for all of Puerto Rico's municipalities,³ as well as the ongoing economic challenges faced by the island, we write to urge you to waive the local cost-sharing requirements by setting the federal cost-share at 100% for Public Assistance grants issued by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) to Puerto Rico.

Puerto Rico was already facing an extremely challenging financial situation before Hurricane Maria struck five years ago this week. That hurricane and its aftermath, along with a failed federal response, resulted in the deaths of thousands of U.S. citizens.⁴ The island's economic challenges mounted, and Puerto Rico still has not fully recovered. Now, Hurricane Fiona deals another blow to U.S. citizens who need urgent federal support. We are concerned that Puerto Rico will have difficulty covering the 25% local match, which could delay access to federal assistance for removing debris and making emergency repairs to public facilities and infrastructure.

The President has statutory authority, pursuant to the *Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act*, to reduce or eliminate the local cost-share requirement following

¹ White House, "President Joseph R. Biden, Jr. Approves Puerto Rico Emergency Declaration," press release, September 18, 2022, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/presidential-actions/2022/09/18/president-joseph-r-biden-jr-approves-puerto-rico-emergency-declaration/>.

² White House, "Readout of President Joe Biden's Call with Governor Pedro Pierluisi," press release, September 19, 2022, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2022/09/19/readout-of-president-joe-bidens-call-with-governor-pedro-pierluisi/>.


³ El Nuevo Día, "Pedro Pierluisi someterá una petición de declaración de desastre mayor al presidente Joe Biden," Gloria Ruiz Kuilan, September 20, 2022, <https://www.elnuevodia.com/noticias/locales/notas/pedro-pierluisi-sometera-una-peticion-de-declaracion-de-desastre-mayor-al-presidente-joe-biden/>.

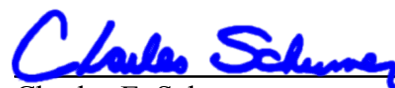
⁴ Milken Institute School of Public Health, George Washington University, "Ascertainment of the Estimated Excess Mortality from Hurricane Maria in Puerto Rico," August 28, 2018, <https://publichealth.gwu.edu/sites/default/files/downloads/projects/PRstudy/Acertainment%20of%20the%20Estimated%20Excess%20Mortality%20from%20Hurricane%20Maria%20in%20Puerto%20Rico.pdf>; NPR, "Hurricane Maria Caused 2,975 Deaths In Puerto Rico, Independent Study Estimates," Adrian Florido, August 28, 2018, <https://www.npr.org/2018/08/28/642615337/hurricane-maria-caused-2-975-deaths-in-puerto-rico-independent-study-estimates>.

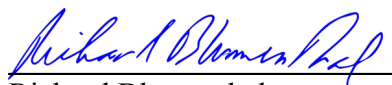
major disasters.⁵ This has been done in the past.⁶ We strongly urge you to take this step now, and not to allow the cost-share to impede the provision of maximum help to those in need.


Thank you for your attention to this urgent request.


Sincerely,



Elizabeth Warren
United States Senator


Charles E. Schumer
United States Senator


Richard Blumenthal
United States Senator


Kirsten Gillibrand
United States Senator


Bernard Sanders
United States Senator

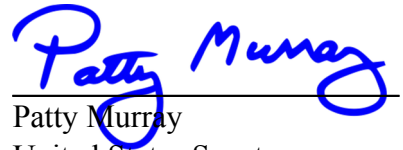

Dianne Feinstein
United States Senator

⁵ Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act, Public Law 100-707.

⁶ See, e.g., Trump White House, “President Donald J. Trump Amends U.S. Virgin Islands Disaster Declarations,” press release, March 16, 2018, <https://trumpwhitehouse.archives.gov/briefings-statements/president-donald-j-trump-amends-u-s-virgin-islands-disaster-declarations/>; FEMA, “President Donald J. Trump Amends Puerto Rico Disaster Declaration,” press release, May 24, 2018, <https://www.fema.gov/press-release/20210318/president-donald-j-trump-amends-puerto-rico-disaster-declaration>.



Cory A. Booker
United States Senator



Patty Murray
United States Senator



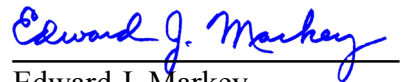
Jeffrey A. Merkley
United States Senator



Richard J. Durbin
United States Senator



Robert Menendez
United States Senator



Edward J. Markey
United States Senator



Christopher S. Murphy
United States Senator