October 25, 2017

Mr. Michael Byrne  
Federal Coordinating Officer  
Interim Operating Facility  
Pedro Rosselló Convention Center  
San Juan, P.R. 00936

Dear Mr. Byrne,

As you are aware, I am very concerned about the plight of the citizens of Puerto Rico in the aftermath of Hurricanes Irma and Maria. With an estimated over 300,000 homes destroyed and many more damaged or without power and water, many of our citizens face the daunting task of finding a safe place for their families to stay at a time when there is a severe shortage of housing options due to the catastrophic disaster.

This situation has created a humanitarian crisis that has been at the forefront of our thoughts and focus of our efforts since the hurricanes. We have mobilized as many resources as possible to deliver aid as our citizens have bravely faced almost unimaginable challenges. We have spent every moment focused on supporting and helping our people through this difficult period. As Governor, I have had to evaluate many options to deal with the housing crisis to determine what is in the best interests of our people. After careful consideration, I have decided to request that FEMA and the Administration approve Temporary Sheltering Assistance (TSA) for displaced Puerto Ricans under Section 403 of the Robert T. Stafford Emergency Assistance and Disaster Relief Act.

While the humanitarian crisis is tantamount in my mind in making this decision, I remain deeply concerned about the future of the tens of thousands of our residents who have decided to temporarily leave and the incentive that TSA could provide for others to leave as well. All citizens comprise the fabric of our communities and will be critical to the physical and economic recovery of our island. Puerto Rico needs its people to be able to return home. It is critical that any government assistance not encourage people to relocate permanently from our state. It is for this reason that I request the following:

- That TSA assistance be made available for a period not to exceed 60 days or until additional on-island housing resources become available;
- That the Administration authorize assistance through Section 425 of the Stafford Act under FEMA's Individual and Households Program to contribute toward the cost of repatriating those residents who have already left Puerto Rico due to the power, water and housing crisis, thereby allowing them to return home before the expiration of the TSA program, restore our communities and become a part of our rebuilding process;
• Consistent with my prior requests, I ask for the immediate activation and initiation of the STEP program to deliver temporary repair assistance to those households that would be able to quickly return to safe and habitable living conditions in their homes if rapid repairs could be completed;
• That FEMA immediately approve permanent or semi-permanent housing construction assistance (and/or direct assistance to individuals and households to construct such housing) under Section 408(c)(4) of the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act, so that our residents can move quickly with FEMA’s help to reconstruct their homes and return to Puerto Rico; and
• That every effort be made to move federal department agency personnel out of hotels and apartments in Puerto Rico into alternative housing locations such as on ships or in government-developed base camps to free-up space for Puerto Rican families who cannot find suitable housing in the aftermath of Hurricanes Irma and Maria.

While there is no one perfect solution to the current situation we now face, the combination of TSA and the additional requests above should provide greatly needed assistance to the people most in need while also providing them with the incentive to either remain in Puerto Rico or return home to rebuild and support the recovery. I greatly appreciate the commitment of this Administration to Puerto Rico, and look forward to your positive response to these requests.

Sincerely,

[Signature]
Ricardo Rosselló Nevares
Governor