

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

February 21, 2020

The Honorable Ben Carson
Secretary
U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development
451 7th Street, SW
Washington, D.C. 20410

The Honorable Russel Vought
Acting Director
Office of Management and Budget
725 17th Street, NW
Washington, D.C. 20503

The Honorable Peter T. Gaynor
Administrator
Federal Emergency Management Agency
500 C Street, SW
Washington, D.C. 20024

The Honorable Dan Brouillette
Secretary
U.S. Department of Energy
1000 Independence Ave, SW
Washington, D.C. 20585

Dear Secretary Carson, Acting Director Vought, Administrator Gaynor and Secretary Brouillette:

We write to respectfully urge you to publish guidelines for the use of federal funds to improve the power grid in Puerto Rico through the Community Development Block Grant-Disaster Relief program (CDBG-DR) in the Federal Register. Through the Bipartisan Budget Act of 2018 (Public Law 115-123), Congress appropriated \$2 billion in CDBG-DR funds to the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) to improve the electrical power systems of grantees impacted by Hurricane Maria. In June 2019, the Office of Community Planning and Development allocated more than \$1.9 billion for Puerto Rico.

Power infrastructure in Puerto Rico was seriously compromised because of Hurricanes Irma and Maria in September 2017. The island experienced extensive periods of power outages, with some residents lacking power for over a year due to challenges in power transmission. Even after electricity was restored, thousands of residents still experienced frequent power outages, which complicate recovery efforts and challenge economic development.

Unfortunately, the island is now faced with another natural disaster. Beginning on December 28, 2019, Puerto Rico has been experiencing constant seismic activity in its southwestern region. And, once again, one of the immediate consequences was loss of power. The Costa Sur power plant, which is located in the municipality of Guayanilla and generates over 800 megawatts of power for the entire island, suffered structural damage that could delay operations for close to a year.

The signing of the grant agreement for approximately \$8.2 billion in unmet needs, combined with the publication in the Federal Register of guidelines for \$8.2 billion for mitigation, will continue to help the Puerto Rico Department of Housing administer disaster recovery funds. However, we cannot neglect pending items. The island needs a stable power infrastructure that is functional, dependable and resilient in the event of future disasters. HUD is an essential partner in this endeavor.


We understand that, given the purpose of these funds, HUD must collaborate with the Federal Emergency Management Administration and the Department of Energy to ensure proper guidance and requirements. Thus, we urge you to conclude this collaboration and expedite the publishing of guidelines in the Federal Register for the electrical power grid in Puerto Rico.

We appreciate your attention to this matter and look forward to updates regarding this issue.

Sincerely,




Jennifer González-Colón
Member of Congress



Rick Scott
U.S. Senator



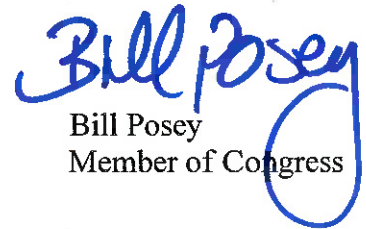
Marco Rubio
U.S. Senator




Donna E. Shalala
Member of Congress



Stephanie Murphy
Member of Congress



Bill Posey
Member of Congress



Michael Waltz
Member of Congress



Darren Soto
Member of Congress