

Drafted by: Lisa Nason
Reviewed by SME: Lizette Valarino
Edited by:
Date requested: Tues 04/24/18
Deadline: ASAP per MTJ/Lizette
Subject: MTJ request for letter to FEMA regarding an extension of TSA Housing.

April 24, 2018

Federal Emergency Management Agency
William B. "Brock" Long, Administrator
P.O. Box 10055
Hyattsville, MD 20782-7055
Via Fax Delivery: 1-800-827-8112
Via Email Delivery: sharon.echevarria@fema.dhs.gov

Dear Administrator Long:

In follow up to the impassioned pleas from a number of displaced Puerto Rican evacuee families and individuals who are now located in the Central Florida region regarding the urgent need for a continuation of Hurricane Maria Disaster Assistance, may I ask for your immediate attention and action?

Particularly with regard to school-aged children, and to best allow evacuee students to complete the current school year with a minimum of further disruption, it is vital that FEMA continue to provide housing and other transitional assistance.

In addition to a continuation of actual housing, a number of specific housing-transition barriers have arisen. These barriers, and suggested FEMA action to eliminate these barriers are as follows:

1. Puerto Rican evacuees are reporting discrimination. FEMA should request "protective class" for Section 8, which would not allow for discrimination of any kind. To briefly explain, certain protected classes are only protected in certain areas. For example, discrimination against people based on race or sex is illegal under the federal Fair Housing Act, while discrimination against Section 8 Voucher holders is a "protected class only" in certain designated areas of the country.

2. Development of a centralized location/system where landlords and property managers can call for background and credit checks, as well as general information of potential Puerto Rican evacuee tenants. This would address the issue of tenants having to pay up to a \$300 non-refundable fee at each location – every time, for every adult in the household – when they submit an application for an apartment.

Drafted by: Lisa Nason
Reviewed by SME: Lizette Valarino
Edited by:

Date requested: Tues 04/24/18
Deadline: ASAP per MTJ/Lizette

Subject: MTJ request for letter to FEMA regarding an extension of TSA Housing.

3. Creation and distribution of a "Bill of Rights" for tenants, in Spanish, so the potential (Puerto Rican evacuee) tenants understand what they are signing, and know and understand their rights as a tenant, as well as responsibilities.

4. As noted earlier, FEMA should extend the housing assistance to May 30th. This would allow children to finish the school year before they are once again uprooted, and would provide the families additional time to save funds needed for rentals and other services needed.

In keeping with Central Florida's long history of neighbors helping neighbors and our culture of care and compassion, via our local United Way organization, Orange County Government has collaborated and partnered with numerous non-profits and local agencies to assist in relief and recovery efforts for our brothers and sisters from Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands impacted by Hurricane Maria. We respectfully ask for your continued leadership and action in providing Disaster Assistance to the many Puerto Rican families, children and individuals who continue to call Central Florida home.

Sincerely,

Teresa Jacobs

C: Wes Maui, Florida Department of Emergency Management

Jeff Hayward, Heart of Florida United Way

Ajit Lalchandani, Orange County Administrator

George Ralls, M.D., Deputy Orange County Administrator

Ron Plummer, Orange County Emergency Management

Lizette Valarino, Office of Orange County Mayor Teresa Jacobs

Erika Gomez Tejeda, Vamos 4 Puerto Rico (VNR – please email copy to egomez-tejeda@seiu32bi.org)