

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

April 19, 2018

William B. Long
Administrator
Federal Emergency Management Agency
500 C St. S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20024

Dear Administrator Long,

We write today regarding the families from Puerto Rico who evacuated to our state in the wake of Hurricane Maria. In light of the recent, continued power outages on the island and the limited financial resources of many evacuees, we ask that the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) permit families enrolled in the Transitional Shelter Assistance (TSA) program in our state to continue living in TSA shelters.

FEMA's Transitional Shelter Assistance program provides temporary shelter to individuals whose homes are "uninhabitable or inaccessible due to a Presidentially-declared disaster."¹ Under the TSA program, eligible applicants can stay free of charge in participating hotel and motel rooms.² On September 21, 2017, President Trump announced a major disaster declaration for the Puerto Rico in the wake of Hurricane Maria,³ a Category 4 storm that devastated the territory. FEMA and the government of Puerto Rico announced on October 30, 2017, that the TSA program was being made "available to Puerto Ricans who are unable to return to their homes because they are displaced."⁴

Power outages like the one last night make it so that evacuees face additional difficulties learning the habitability status of their former homes, and plans to travel—if possible—back to Puerto Rico. Many evacuees currently residing in Western Massachusetts have been given a TSA deadline of Friday, April 20, 2018 and face uncertainty to where they will go after this date. Given the circumstances of these Puerto Rican families, as well as the unique challenges facing evacuees who lose access to the TSA program, we respectfully request that you permit evacuees living in our states to continue living in TSA shelters.

¹ Federal Emergency Management Agency, "Fact Sheet: Transitional Shelter Assistance" (online at <https://www.fema.gov/media-library-data/1504386291776-95f2e849464628ac124a7f859c448e2e/FactSheetTransitionalShelterAssistance.pdf>).

² Federal Emergency Management Agency, "FEMA Evacuee Hotel List" (online at <http://www.femaevachotels.com/index.php>).

³ The White House, "President Donald J. Trump Approves Puerto Rico Disaster Declaration" (September 21, 2017) (online at <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefings-statements/president-donald-j-trump-approves-puerto-rico-disaster-declaration-2/>).

⁴ Federal Emergency Management Agency, "Transitional Sheltering Assistance Available to Residents of Puerto Rico Displaced by Hurricanes Irma and Maria" (October 30, 2017) (online at <https://www.fema.gov/news-release/2017/10/30/4339/transitional-sheltering-assistance-available-residents-puerto-rico-displaced>).

Please don't hesitate to reach out to Julie Siegel of Senator Warren's staff at 202-224-4543, or Jeremy D'Aloisio of Senator Markey's staff at 202-224-2752 with any questions or concerns.

Sincerely,


Elizabeth Warren
United States Senator


Edward J. Markey
United States Senator