



Legislation Text

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Res. No. 1256

Resolution calling upon the Trump Administration to release any remaining federal disaster recovery funds from Hurricane Maria to Puerto Rico and provide additional funds in response to recent earthquakes on the island.

By Council Members Cabrera and Brannan

Whereas, It has been over two years since Hurricane Maria struck Puerto Rico causing approximately \$90 billion in damage, and yet the island has not received sufficient recovery funds from the United States (U.S.); and

Whereas, In 2018, the U.S. approved approximately \$20 billion in long-term recovery aid to Puerto Rico to be disbursed by the Housing and Urban Development (HUD), however, as of January 2020, only \$1.5 billion in HUD funds have been made available to the island, as reported by the National Public Radio (NPR); and

Whereas, On January 15, 2020, NPR reported that of the \$1.5 billion made available, Puerto Rico has utilized about \$11 million; and

Whereas, Recently, Puerto Rico was met with more devastation as the island experienced more than 500 earthquakes with a magnitude of 2 or greater since December 28, 2019 according to the Cable News Network (CNN); and

Whereas, On January 7, 2020, a 6.4 magnitude earthquake struck the island, killing one person and leaving hundreds of others homeless; and

Whereas, As reported by the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) News, this earthquake was the strongest the island has experienced in over a century, and at one point during the aftermath, over 65 percent of

Puerto Rico's population did not have power; and

Whereas, According to a report released by the United States Geological Survey (USGS), USGS experts estimate that aftershocks from the earthquake will continue for years to decades, while decreasing in frequency; and

Whereas, USGS's report acknowledges that the probability that Puerto Rico will experience an aftershock of a magnitude of 6 or greater will remain above 25 percent for the next three months to three years; and

Whereas, As CNN reports, the series of earthquakes in Puerto Rico exacerbated the devastation caused by 2017 hurricanes Irma and Maria; and

Whereas, In response to recent disasters, on January 17, 2020, the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) announced that victims of Puerto Rico earthquakes that occurred since December 28, 2019 may be eligible for a tax relief from the IRS; and

Whereas, The declaration permits the IRS to defer certain deadlines for taxpayers who live in or have a business in "the disaster area"; and

Whereas, As reported by the Wall Street Journal (WSJ), on February 7, 2020, the House passed a \$4.7 billion disaster-aid package to support earthquake-recovery efforts in Puerto Rico, however, the legislation is unlikely to pass in the Senate and the White House stated it would veto the legislation; and

Whereas, According to news sources, the Trump administration and Republicans have resisted allocating additional federal funding to Puerto Rico due to their concerns about how the aid would be used; and

Whereas, The WSJ also reported that, in January 2020, the Trump administration stated that they would release \$16 billion in disaster aid for the island while also imposing terms including requiring the island to submit detailed budgets; and

Whereas, In February 2020, President Donald Trump appointed U.S. Coast Guard Rear Admiral Peter J. Brown as special representative for Puerto Rico's disaster recovery, who will be tasked with coordinating

infrastructure efforts with White House agencies including the Office of Management and Budget, and Congress and Puerto Rico officials; and

Whereas, While the recent earthquakes in Puerto Rico have resurfaced discussions on how the U.S. should support the commonwealth during a critical time, advocates are demanding that the U.S. move from conversation to action by releasing relief funds due to the commonwealth from Hurricane Maria and appropriating additional funds that would help the island recover from recent earthquake devastations; now, therefore be it

Resolved, That the Council of the City of New York calls upon the Trump Administration to release any remaining federal disaster recovery funds from Hurricane Maria to Puerto Rico and provide additional funds in response to recent earthquakes on the island.

LS # 13482
2/19/2020
KJ