



United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-0905

BILL NELSON
FLORIDA

April 16, 2018

Ms. Cissy Proctor
Executive Director
Florida Department of Economic Opportunity
107 East Madison St
Tallahassee, Florida 32399

Dear Director Proctor:

I understand Florida will soon release its State Action Plan which will outline its proposed use of Community Development Block Grant – Disaster Recovery (CDBG-DR) funds, which were made available as part of a disaster aid bill Congress passed last year. As you prepare this plan, it is important to ensure adequate planning be focused on low-income individuals who need stable housing in Florida and that you conduct outreach to actively engage with these communities during the comment period.

It's no secret that Florida's availability of and standards for adequate affordable housing are severely deficient. As you know, the goal of CDBG funds are to primarily aid low- and moderate-income individuals. To that end, the law requires that no less than 70 percent of CDBG-DR funds should be allocated to eligible activities that principally benefit low- and moderate-income individuals. While the state can request waivers to alter this threshold, I strongly encourage you to preserve current CDBG-DR thresholds at 70 percent, which will help target assistance for those most in need and challenging to rehouse—who are often renters. With this in mind, I urge you to include equitable resources for renters as well as homeowners in the State Action Plan.

As we prepare for the next hurricane season—which is just two months away—it's critical that there also be a long-term plan to safeguard against future storms further limiting affordable housing options in Florida. There needs to be an honest assessment of current and alternative affordable housing options in the state, with an eye toward ensuring supply can meet any future demand in the wake of a storm.

Through the drafting of the State Action Plan, your Department must work with low- and moderate-income individuals to properly address their needs in the recovery process. This requires proactive outreach, such as community meetings, accessible notices, and other actions. Additionally, Florida is a diverse state made up of large multicultural populations. To make this process and future responses to disasters easier on all parties, there must be resources available for all individuals whose first language may not be English, including Spanish and Haitian Creole.

Thank you for consideration of this request.

Sincerely,

Bill Nelson