

May 4, 2018



Ms. Heather Martin
Community Development Block Grant - Disaster Recovery Program
Department of Economic Opportunity
107 East Madison Street
Caldwell Building
Tallahassee, Florida 32399-4120
via email CDBG-DR@DEO.MyFlorida.com

Ms. Martin:

The Miami Climate Alliance (MCA) submits the following comments for the State of Florida's consideration regarding the Florida Department of Economic Opportunity 2018 State of Florida CDBG-DR Action Plan.

The MCA, a network of over 70 organizations and hundreds of additional individuals dedicated to creating people-centered solutions that address sea level rise and other impacts of climate change, has been working to ensure equity in disaster resilience policy by activating organizations and community through strategic action, increasing understanding of climate change and sea level rise as threats that require informed community-based problem solving, and building urgency around community well-being.

Before and after Hurricane Irma, the MCA was instrumental in assisting Miami-Dade County's most vulnerable populations, helping to feed thousands in South Florida. We also visited hundreds of homes and listened to the stories of families and individuals whose homes were impacted by the storm. It is with them in mind that we submit the below comments and seek action from the State.

1. Increase the opportunity for citizen participation in the State Action Plan (SAP) by:
 - a. Extending the deadline for receiving public comments.
 - b. Provide an opportunity for public hearings to be held across the state before submitting the final state action plan.
 - c. Make resources accessible to people with language barriers, including those who speak Spanish, Vietnamese, or Creole.
 - d. Make resources available to people with disabilities.
2. Allocate resources equitably between homeowners and renters. Several state disaster recovery resources have already been directed at assisting homeowners. Units housing low-income households, many of whom are renters, represent 75% of the units damaged from Hurricane Irma. It is important that the CDBG-DR allocation recognize the decrease in homeownership and increase in renter households that has taken place in the state.
3. Allocate funding for Tenant-Based Rental Assistance (TBRA). The SAP provides funding for new construction for rental housing but does little to address the needs of tenants who were displaced due to hurricane damage and are in need of housing now. As such, we recommend



providing TBRA that can be extended for up to 48 months while renters wait for new affordable rental housing to be constructed.

4. Prohibit recipients of federal and state disaster recovery funds from refusing to rent to tenants based on their source of income.
5. Provide low income residents with the ability to return to their communities.
6. Provide funding to address the preservation of damaged rental units. The SAP should set aside at least 15% of the LIHTC funding for preservation to rehabilitate existing affordable housing units. This would greatly increase the effectiveness of the LIHTC program, as preservation requires far less subsidy per unit than new construction.

Thank you for your consideration,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Maggie Fernandez".

Maggie Fernandez, Chair
Miami Climate Alliance