



United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-0905

BILL NELSON
FLORIDA

February 6, 2018

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Majority Leader
S-230, U.S. Capitol
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Charles Schumer
Minority Leader
S-221, U.S. Capitol
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Majority Leader McConnell and Minority Leader Schumer:

I have called on Congress for months to provide meaningful relief to Puerto Rico so they can recover from the devastation brought by Hurricanes Irma and Maria.

It has been over four months since Hurricane Maria struck and nearly one-third of the island is without electricity, funding for Puerto Rico's Medicaid program is running out, and reports indicate that over 300,000 of the island's residents have moved to Florida. Even before the hurricanes hit, Puerto Rico was in the midst of an economic crisis with 44.9 percent of the 3.5 million American citizens living in poverty.

That is why I am renewing my call for you to help our fellow Americans by including disaster aid as part of any funding bill that Congress passes this week. Any disaster aid package should address the many recovery needs specific to Puerto Rico. This includes resources for their electric grid and waiving any required federal cost-shares for the island, which would force Puerto Rico to contribute recovery money it does not have. Additionally, it should include efforts to address Puerto Rico's Medicaid funding cliff and also increase the federal matching rate from 55 percent to 100 percent for at least two years. Again, Puerto Rico simply does not have the ability to draw down the federal dollars, and needs this help to take care of its residents.

Moreover, any language pressing the Oversight Board to unavoidably intrude on the rights and responsibilities of the Puerto Rican people and their elected representatives would be counterproductive to the recovery process and unfair.

Our fellow Americans are desperately waiting for Congress to act on a disaster supplemental package to help them rebuild. I urge you to exercise your power as Senate leadership and attach disaster aid to any funding bill that moves through Congress this week. We cannot let another opportunity pass us by.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Bill Nelson" with a long horizontal line extending to the right.