



Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

March 25, 2022

The Honorable Deanne Criswell
Administrator
Federal Emergency Management Agency
500 C Street, SW
Washington, DC 20472

Administrator Criswell:

While we appreciate the Federal Emergency Management Agency's (FEMA) extension of its direct housing mission for survivors of Hurricanes Laura and Delta, we are writing to share concerns about recent notice of monthly rent payments. The extenuating circumstances surrounding Southwest Louisiana's recovery warrant an uncommon response. We respectfully request that FEMA waive required monthly rent payments through October 31, 2022, for the nearly 1,700 households currently utilizing the direct housing program for Hurricanes Laura and Delta.

Southwest Louisiana was devastated by an unprecedented string of natural disasters in 2020 and 2021. Hurricanes Laura, Delta, a severe winter storm, and the May 2021 flood event caused extensive damage to the region and created major disruptions to the recovery process. These disasters were in addition to pandemic-related challenges, lumber shortages, and nationwide supply chain issues that have hamstrung construction and rebuilding efforts. These compounding issues have caused extensive delays for Southwest Louisiana families trying to return to permanent housing.

Nearly 19 months after Hurricane Laura's landfall and six months after Congress appropriated funding, the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) has finally announced its allocation to the State of Louisiana through the Community Development Block Grant Disaster Recovery (CDBG-DR) program. Louisiana's share of CDBG-DR funding will largely be used to address unmet housing needs. While these long-term recovery resources will greatly help Louisiana's recovery mission, the funding is still making its way through the bureaucratic process and is not able to be spent at this time. We expect those funds to be released to the State of Louisiana as soon as May. A waiver on rent through October 31, 2022, will allow

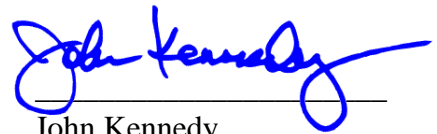
CDBG-DR money to flow into the community and address essential housing needs before rent payments begin.

Given these unique circumstances, we believe FEMA should take action to provide additional relief for hurricane survivors in Southwest Louisiana. Again, we ask that FEMA waive the required monthly rent payments for direct housing program participants through October 31, 2022. Thank you for your continued attention to hurricane recovery efforts in South Louisiana. We appreciate your consideration of this request and look forward to your response.

Respectfully,



Bill Cassidy, M.D.
U.S. Senator



John Kennedy
U.S. Senator



Clay Higgins
Member of Congress