

May 1, 2023

The Honorable Sherrod Brown
Chairman
Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban
Affairs
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Tim Scott
Ranking Member
Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban
Affairs
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Patrick McHenry
Chairman
Committee on Financial Services
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Maxine Waters
Ranking Member
Committee on Financial Services
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairmen Brown and McHenry and Ranking Members Scott and Waters,

From severe storms across the Midwest to recent flooding on the Mississippi River and in Florida and California, communities across the U.S. hard hit by natural disasters face a long road to recovery. While the full extent of the damage is yet to be assessed, impacted communities will require major long-term disaster recovery assistance from the federal government to build back flattened homes and businesses as well as impaired critical infrastructure. Unfortunately, HUD's Community Development Block Grant Disaster Recovery program (CDBG-DR), a primary vehicle for delivering housing and other recovery assistance, is hampered in its ability to deliver efficient, effective assistance.

We strongly encourage you to work in a bipartisan fashion to advance legislation to codify the CDBG-DR program in the 118th Congress. CDBG-DR funding is crucial to help communities address unmet needs and build back after increasingly catastrophic storms, but lack of permanent authorization prevents the timely delivery of aid and diminishes the program's impact. Enhancing the impact of these federal resources and making the program more efficient should be a top priority for both parties.

Without permanent authorization, CDBG-DR must rely on an endless series of supplemental appropriations and Federal Register notices, creating delays and administrative burdens that are a disservice to disaster survivors. It can take many years for funding to become available, leaving a gap between immediate disaster response and long-term recovery that severely harms impacted communities, prolongs displacement of disaster survivors, and at times results in permanent relocation of vulnerable populations. Further, the uncertainty of long-term disaster funding prevents communities from planning for and maximizing the impact of CDBG-DR funding, ultimately delaying recovery timelines. BPC conducted [a survey of CDBG-DR grantees](#)—from both red and blue states—and 97% agreed that permanent statutory authorization is very or somewhat important. It received the highest-level of support among a list of recently proposed reforms intended to make CDBG-DR assistance more timely, predictable, equitable, and efficient.

Congress has appropriated about \$100 billion for long-term disaster recovery purposes through CDBG-DR since 1992 and continues to appropriate funding to the CDBG-DR program without addressing the fundamental, unavoidable issues that come without statutory authorization. It is likely that CDBG-DR will continue to be the federal government's primary long-term disaster recovery program—as it has been for well over a decade—because communities impacted by disasters rely so heavily on it. It is past time to make the program more efficient and effective so that the billions of taxpayer dollars directed toward this program in the future are well spent.

Specifically, bipartisan legislation should direct HUD to establish permanent regulations for CDBG-DR, enhancing the program's efficiency and predictability. The legislation would also include a slate of technical reforms to improve the program that have broad support among grantees—as was included in the Reforming Disaster Recovery Act, [bipartisan legislation](#) introduced in previous sessions of Congress. Permanent authorization of CDBG-DR already passed in the House twice, including as a standalone bill with bipartisan support in 2019.

Increasingly catastrophic weather events—including hurricanes, flooding, and fires—have destroyed homes, businesses, and critical infrastructure, affecting the lives of millions of Americans. Sadly, we know that, while CDBG-DR funding will provide a lifeline to many families trying to get back on their feet, assistance will be too slow, leading to a weaker recovery than necessary. By permanently authorizing the program, we can ensure that communities responding to future disasters have the capacity to carry out more rapid and robust recovery efforts especially as disasters continue to grow in strength and frequency.

We stand ready to work with you to enact sensible, bipartisan legislation to meet this urgent need.

Sincerely,

BPC Action
Council of State Community Development Agencies
Enterprise Community Partners
Habitat for Humanity International
SBP