

United States Senate
WASHINGTON, DC 20510

March 17, 2025

The Honorable Scott Turner
Secretary
U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development
451 7th Street SW
Washington, DC 20410

Dear Secretary Turner:

We write today regarding our concerns that recent actions taken by the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) are hampering our states' ability to access Community Development Block Grant Disaster Recovery (CDBG-DR) funds, and could degrade the ability to recover from both current and future disasters.¹ The CDBG-DR program is critical to our states' ability to recover from natural disasters, and it is essential that HUD distributes funding as quickly and efficiently as possible. We request additional information on your plans to ensure that communities continue to receive the resources they need to rebuild.

Communities across the country experienced significant natural disasters in 2023 and 2024. States across the South—including Florida, Tennessee, North Carolina, South Carolina, Virginia, and Georgia—were devastated by Hurricanes Milton and Helene,² while Alaska, Louisiana, New Mexico, Pennsylvania, and Illinois experienced severe storms.³ States in the Northeast—including Vermont⁴ and Massachusetts⁵—faced life-threatening floods, while states in the West—including California, Washington State, and Hawaii—saw catastrophic wildfires.⁶

CDBG-DR provides states, cities, counties, and Tribes with funding to support recovery efforts in the wake of natural disasters.⁷ In December 2024, Congress appropriated \$12 billion in

¹ Bloomberg Law, "US Housing Department to Shed Half its Workers, Union Chief Says," Courtney Rozen, February 13, 2025, <https://news.bloomberglaw.com/daily-labor-report/us-housing-department-to-shed-half-its-workers-union-chief-says>.

² Federal Emergency Management Agency, "Hurricane Helene," <https://www.fema.gov/disaster/current/hurricane-helene>; Federal Emergency Management Agency, "Florida Hurricane Milton," <https://www.fema.gov/disaster/4834>.

³ CNN, "Biden administration requesting roughly \$100 billion for disaster relief," Betsy Klein, November 18, 2024, <https://www.cnn.com/2024/11/18/politics/biden-administration-request-disaster-relief/index.html>.

⁴ Federal Emergency Management Agency, "Vermont Severe Storms, Flooding, Landslides, and Mudslides," <https://www.fema.gov/disaster/4720>.

⁵ Federal Emergency Management Agency, "Massachusetts Severe Storms and Flooding," <https://www.fema.gov/disaster/4780>.

⁶ Federal Emergency Management Agency, "California Wildfires and Straight-line Winds," <https://www.fema.gov/disaster/4856>; Federal Emergency Management Agency, "Washington Wildfires," <https://www.fema.gov/disaster/4759>; Federal Emergency Management Agency, "Hawaii Wildfires," <https://www.fema.gov/disaster/4724>.

⁷ Department of Housing and Urban Development, "Community Development Block Grant Disaster Recovery Grant Funds," https://www.hud.gov/program_offices/comm_planning/cdbg-dr.

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emergency supplemental CDBG-DR funding.⁸ During your confirmation process, you made clear that, if confirmed, you would prioritize getting our constituents CDBG-DR funding as quickly as possible. Specifically, you stated that “one of [your] top priorities” as HUD Secretary would “be to ensure that the disaster recovery funding passed by Congress gets out to communities swiftly” and “into the hands of Americans who have been impacted by recent disasters.”⁹ Your statements indicated a strong commitment to providing our disaster-impacted communities with the resources they need, but we are concerned that recent actions at the Department have not matched that verbal commitment.

For years, the HUD Office of Inspector General listed disaster recovery oversight as a top management challenge at HUD, noting the need for systems and staff to keep pace with increases in CDBG-DR funding, as well as the need to build the capacity of CDBG-DR grantees.¹⁰ The latest Top Management Challenges report highlighted multiple ways in which HUD has made “meaningful progress,” largely due to the investment Congress has made over the years to support staff, systems, and capacity building. Over the last week, however, more than one thousand HUD employees (13% of HUD’s workforce) were fired or accepted the Administration’s deferred resignation offer—including staff supporting the CDBG-DR program. Furthermore, according to recent reports, HUD “plans to discharge 50% of its overall workforce,”¹¹ and the Office of Community Planning and Development, which is responsible for supporting disaster recovery efforts, is targeted for a staggering 84% cut.¹² Should such cuts move forward, it is unclear how the Department will continue to ensure the efficient delivery of CDBG-DR funds so our states and communities can continue to rebuild after devastating disasters.

HUD has also postponed previously scheduled trainings designed to help grantees understand CDBG-DR program requirements, and it is not clear when those trainings will resume.¹³ Moreover, continued uncertainty on whether and the extent to which HUD may change the current Universal Notice governing the latest allocations from the Disaster Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act, 2025 (Public Law 118-158) could cause additional delays. At least one grantee has already started accepting public comments on their draft action plan.¹⁴ Any major

⁸ Department of Housing and Urban Development, “Community Development Block Grant Disaster Recovery Grant Funds,” https://www.hud.gov/program_offices/comm_planning/cdbg-dr.

⁹ Response from HUD Secretary Scott Turner to Questions for the Record from Ranking Member Elizabeth Warren.

¹⁰ U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development Office of the Inspector General, “Top Management Challenges,” <https://www.hudoig.gov/library/top-management-challenges>.

¹¹ Bloomberg Law, “US Housing Department to Shed Half its Workers, Union Chief Says,” Courtney Rozen, February 13, 2025, <https://news.bloomberglaw.com/daily-labor-report/us-housing-department-to-shed-half-its-workers-union-chief-says>.

¹² New York Times, “Trump Team Plans Deep Cuts at Office That Funds Recovery From Big Disasters,” Christopher Flavelle, February 20, 2025, <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/02/20/climate/trump-cuts-hud-disaster-recovery.html>.

¹³ HUD Exchange, “Postponed: Universal Notice Rollout Webinar Series,” January 27, 2025, <https://www.hudexchange.info/news/universal-notice-rollout-webinar-series/>.

¹⁴ North Carolina Department of Commerce, “Disaster Recovery,” <https://www.commerce.nc.gov/grants-incentives/disaster-recovery>.

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deviations from current requirements could be a huge setback for communities, adding months to recovery efforts.

We urge you to immediately stop any additional cuts to the workforce and contracts involved in disaster recovery oversight and reinstate any recently terminated probationary staff.

To help us better understand the current status of the CDBG-DR program and your plans to ensure the uninterrupted delivery of CDBG-DR funds for our states and others across the country, we request information to the following questions no later than Monday, March 24, 2025:

1. All grantees who received allocations from Public Law 118-158 have been using the CDBG-DR Universal Notice to develop their action plans.¹⁵
 - a. Do you intend to make changes to the Universal Notice?
 - b. If so, how will HUD do that in a way that is minimally disruptive to the grantees whose action plans are underway and to avoid delaying assistance?
 - c. What is HUD's timeline for reissuing the second allocation notice for Public Law 118-158 funding that was posted to the Federal Register for public inspection on January 21, 2025 but withdrawn on January 22, 2025?¹⁶
2. How many HUD employees were responsible for supporting the implementation of the CDBG-DR program, including the delivery of recently appropriated supplemental funding, on January 20, 2025? Please delineate by field versus headquarters and employee status (e.g., career, conditional, term, etc.).
3. How many HUD employees are responsible for supporting the implementation of the CDBG-DR program, including the delivery of recently appropriated supplemental funding, on March 17, 2025? Please delineate by field versus headquarters and employee status (e.g., career, conditional, term, etc.).
4. What additional plans, if any, does the Department have to further reduce the number of HUD employees responsible for implementing the CDBG-DR program?
5. What analyses, if any, has HUD conducted to assess the impact of any proposed or implemented workforce reductions on the Department's ability to implement CDBG-DR funding? Please provide copies of any written communications, analyses, and other

¹⁵ U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, "Allocations for Community Development Block Grant Disaster Recovery and Implementation of the CDBG-DR Consolidated Waivers and Alternative Requirements Notice (UN AAN)," January 16, 2025, <https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2025/01/16/2025-00943/allocations-for-community-development-block-grant-disaster-recovery-and-implementation-of-the>.

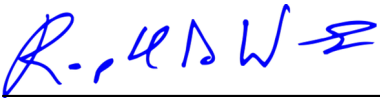
¹⁶ Federal Register, "01/21/2025 Public Inspection Issue," <https://www.federalregister.gov/public-inspection/2025/01/21>.

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documentation on how workforce reductions could impact the CDBG-DR program produced between January 21, 2025, and March 17, 2025.

6. What services, such as trainings and the provision of technical assistance, was HUD providing to CDBG-DR grantees on January 20, 2025?
7. What services, if any, is HUD currently providing to CDBG-DR grantees? What changes, if any, have occurred to the services provided to CDBG-DR grantees since January 20, 2025?
8. What additional plans, if any, does the Department have to alter the available services provided to CDBG-DR grantees?
9. Have any contracts related to the CDBG-DR program been terminated since January 20, 2025, as a result of the ongoing review of the ongoing reviews of HUD programs?¹⁷ If so, please detail which contracts, the reason for termination, and the plan for addressing the contracted work, if applicable.

Sincerely,



Raphael Warnock
United States Senator



Elizabeth Warren
Ranking Member
Committee on Banking,
Housing, and Urban Affairs




Martin Heinrich
United States Senator



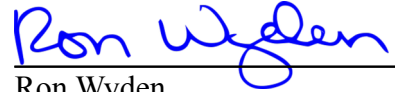
Adam B. Schiff
United States Senator

¹⁷ U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, “ICYMI | Secretary Scott Turner on The Charlie Kirk Show,” press release, February 13, 2025, https://www.hud.gov/press/press_releases_media_advisories/hud_no_25_029.

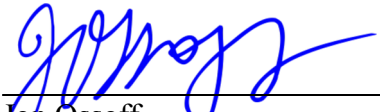
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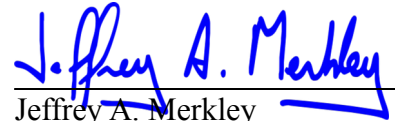
Mark R. Warner
United States Senator



Ron Wyden
United States Senator



Jon Ossoff
United States Senator



Jeffrey A. Merkley
United States Senator



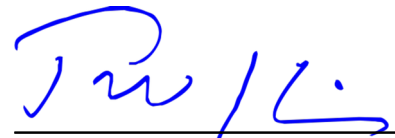
Peter Welch
United States Senator



Jacky Rosen
United States Senator



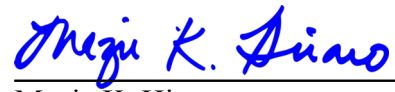
Kirsten Gillibrand
United States Senator



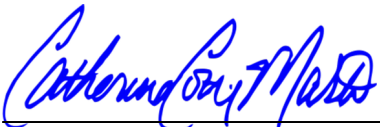
Tim Kaine
United States Senator



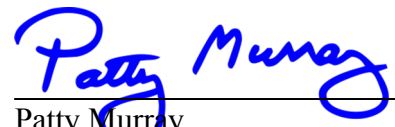
Bernard Sanders
United States Senator



Mazie K. Hirono
United States Senator

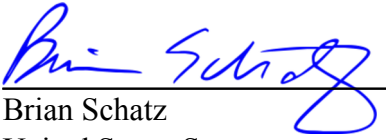


Catherine Cortez Masto
United States Senator

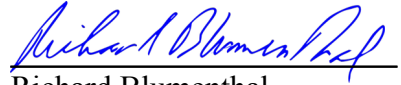


Patty Murray
United States Senator

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Brian Schatz
United States Senator



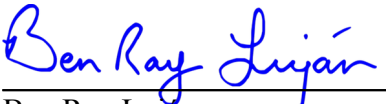
Richard Blumenthal
United States Senator



Chris Van Hollen
United States Senator



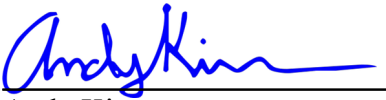
Angela Alsobrooks
United States Senator



Ben Ray Lujan
United States Senator



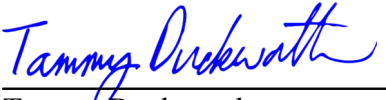
Richard J. Durbin
United States Senator



Andy Kim
United States Senator



Christopher A. Coons
United States Senator



Tammy Duckworth
United States Senator



Jack Reed
United States Senator



Lisa Blunt Rochester
United States Senator

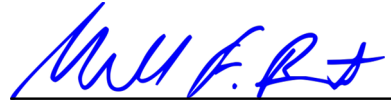


Tammy Baldwin
United States Senator

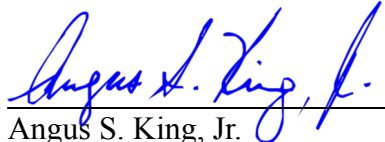
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Amy Klobuchar
United States Senator



Michael F. Bennet
United States Senator



Angus S. King, Jr.
United States Senator



Tina Smith
United States Senator



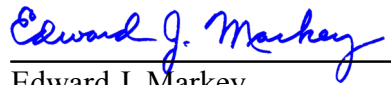
Cory A. Booker
United States Senator



Gary C. Peters
United States Senator



Alex Padilla
United States Senator



Edward J. Markey
United States Senator



Jeanne Shaheen
United States Senator



John Hickenlooper
United States Senator



Elissa Slotkin
United States Senator

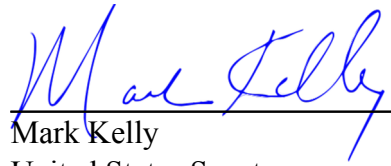


Sheldon Whitehouse
United States Senator

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Ruben Gallego
United States Senator



Mark Kelly
United States Senator



Charles E. Schumer
United States Senator