Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20510

October 6, 2017

The Honorable Thad Cochran
Chairman
Senate Committee on Appropriations
United States Capitol, Room S-128
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Patrick Leahy
Vice Chairman
Senate Committee on Appropriations
United States Capitol, Room S-128
Washington DC, 20510

The Honorable Rodney Frelinghuysen
Chairman
House Committee on Appropriations
United States Capitol, Room H-305
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Nita Lowey
Ranking Member
House Committee on Appropriations
1016 Longworth House Office Bldg.
Washington DC, 20515

Dear Chairman Cochran, Vice Chairman Leahy, Chairman Frelinghuysen, and Ranking Member Lowey:

On Sunday, September 10, 2017, Hurricane Irma made landfall on Cudjoe Key as a category four storm. This devastating hurricane impacted the majority of the state, prompting President Trump to approve a major disaster declaration for all 67 of Florida's counties. Almost a month later, Floridians are still recovering, and much work remains to be done.

Three hurricanes have hit U.S. soil in a short time, stretching our federal agencies, first responders, and community resources thin. With more than a month left in the 2017 hurricane season, and another storm brewing in the Gulf of Mexico, Americans need to know that the federal government is ready to respond. While the administration, through the Office of Management and Budget, has put forth a proposal that would infuse sorely needed support into the Federal Emergency Management Agency's (FEMA) Disaster Relief Fund (DRF), we respectfully request additional resources, which are both timely and appropriate. This supplemental package should serve as a down payment on hurricane recovery efforts while we await full assessment of needs later this month.

- **U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA):** Hurricane Irma caused massive damage to Florida's agriculture community with initial total loss estimates from Florida's Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services at $2,558,598,303 and rising. Our signature crop, citrus, was hit especially hard with an estimated $760,816,600 in losses. Initial total loss estimates in Puerto Rico from Hurricane Maria are as high as $15,000,000,000. We request an increase in the borrowing authority for the Commodity Credit Corporation (CCC) to ensure critical Tree Assistance Program (TAP) and

Livestock Indemnity Program (LIP) assistance is available. We also request additional flexibility for the secretary to use CCC and Section 32 funds for disaster relief and recovery where traditional disaster programs and authorities prove woefully inadequate, including for particularly hard hit crops like citrus, and for a diverse suite of specialty crops, aquaculture products, and greenhouse, nursery, and floriculture products in Florida that are not well served by traditional USDA safety net programs. To help sustain and rebuild the citrus industry, we request language be included that is identical to S. 71/H.R.112, the Emergency Citrus Disease Response Act, additional support for the Citrus Health Response Fund and Citrus Greening programs to monitor the spread of and respond to ongoing citrus disease outbreaks, and an emergency expansion of the TAP for citrus in hurricane-afflicted disaster declaration counties to allow for an increase in the total annual assistance cap and suspension of the AGI and acreage limitations. We request robust funding for the Stafford Act accounts within the Emergency Conservation Program and the Emergency Watershed Protection Program to rehabilitate farmland and further reduce longer-term production declines associated with Hurricanes Irma and Maria. We request a robust increase in the Emergency Assistance for Livestock, Honeybees, and Farm-raised Fish to help cover damages outside of the scope of the LIP program. It should be noted that many vital USDA programs aide those in disaster areas for periods of time after a storm has passed. One such program, the Temporary Emergency Food Assistance Program, specifically aids those who are low-income and elderly and can provide critical sustenance. Additionally, USDA's Section 521 Rural Rental Assistance Program provides rental assistance to help meet affordable housing demand in rural areas impacted by the storms.
[REQUEST: $5 billion]

- **U.S. Army Corps of Engineers:** The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) is charged with building and maintaining the nation's hurricane and storm damage reduction infrastructure, and is critical to recovery efforts after major disasters. We believe it is necessary to adequately fund the USACE efforts to keep the nation's waterways and ports dredged, and to protect our coastal communities and cities from flooding. Given the devastation from Hurricanes Irma and Maria, we strongly recommend additional USACE resources be included in the next supplemental appropriations bill. The purpose of these resources would be to rehabilitate and repair damages to completed USACE projects and those under construction, to implement authorized projects ready for construction, to dredge federal navigation channels, nourish shorelines and habitats that were damaged from the hurricanes, and for emergency response and recovery operations, repairs, and other activities. We specifically request robust funding to expedite the completion of the Herbert Hoover Dike, which is in need of emergency repair, and to expedite authorized South Florida Ecosystem Restoration project planning, design, and construction that would have allowed water managers critical flexibility to reduce flood damage and risk throughout South Florida. We also request a modification to the South Atlantic Coastal Study, which was signed into law with the 2016 Water Resources Development Act, that would clarify the study being a 100 percent cost share from the federal government. This vital study will provide multiple states within the South Atlantic District with the information they need for

mitigation.
[REQUEST: $10 billion]

- **U.S. Coast Guard:** The men and women of the U.S. Coast Guard have selflessly and courageously served this nation in the past few months. With back-to-back storms, Coast Guard personnel were our first responders. In addition, key Coast Guard facilities have experienced significant damage from Hurricanes Matthew, Harvey, Irma and Maria. The Coast Guard has estimated a total cost of $1.2 billion.
[REQUEST: $1 billion]

- **U.S. Department of Defense:** During Hurricane Irma, the Department of Defense (DOD) deployed 3,717 Title 10 Active and 2,857 National Guard service members, for a total of 6,574 military personnel called to support relief efforts within Florida and affected U.S. territories. The DOD estimates $623.4 million in Hurricane Irma evacuation and damage-related expenses, which includes damaged DOD facilities, equipment, or other assets; military personnel on a federal status; civilian pay; operating support; supplies and equipment; and transportation. Reimbursable FEMA-directed Mission Assignments amounted to an additional $586.8 million. The cost of damages incurred could increase as assessments of any damage to DOD facilities and equipment are ongoing. The Navy has submitted a placeholder of $300 million for military construction costs for facility damages in Florida. The DOD anticipates that it will continue incurring costs for damage-related activities for Hurricane Irma into Fiscal Year (FY) 2018.

  During Hurricane Maria, the DOD deployed approximately 3,150 DOD personnel in the Caribbean. The DOD has yet to receive initial damage estimates for any facilities in the affected region and it is too early to determine the magnitude of such estimates. However, based on preliminary reporting, the DOD estimates a total of $3.0 million in Hurricane Maria response and damage-related expenses for damaged DOD facilities, equipment, or other assets; military personnel on a federal status; civilian pay; operating support; supplies and equipment; and transportation. Reimbursable FEMA-directed Mission Assignments amounted to an additional $441.1 million. Please note that assessments of any damage to DOD facilities and equipment are ongoing and this estimate is expected to increase as the DOD anticipates it will continue incurring costs for response-related activities for Hurricane Maria into FY2018.
[REQUEST: $1 billion]

- **Community Development Block Grant Disaster Recovery (CDBG-DR)**: H.R. 601 (P.L. 115-56) appropriated $7.4 billion for this program, to remain available until expended, for all major disasters declared in 2017. Given the projected unmet needs resulting from three major hurricanes, we strongly urge an additional down payment of CDBG-DR resources in the next emergency supplemental.
[REQUEST: $7 billion]

- **State Educational Agencies:** Florida educational institutions have reported widespread damages to schools and infrastructure as a result of Hurricane Irma, with assessments not yet complete. In the past, emergency supplemental packages have included resources for

Local Educational Agencies (LEA), schools and institutions of higher education that were affected by natural disasters. Coupled with Hurricane Maria, which decimated both Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands and could cause large-scale migration to the U.S. mainland, Florida's schools would feel these effects. In order to ensure that the education system endures minimal interruption, we request that the appropriations committees consider providing emergency assistance to elementary schools, secondary schools, and institutions of higher education, with unexpected expenses as a result of Hurricanes Irma and Maria.
[REQUEST: $2 billion]

- **Transportation Infrastructure:** In order to address long-term recovery needs, it is vital that our state's highways and transit systems are quickly restored and serviceable to ensure the movement of emergency supplies. Authorized under 23 U.S.C. 125 and 49 U.S.C. 5324, the U.S. Department of Transportation's Emergency Relief Program and the Public Transportation Emergency Relief Program, respectively, are crucial programs that can provide Florida and U.S. territories with immediate resources for transportation infrastructure repairs.
[REQUEST: $150 million]

- **Federal Emergency Management Agency:** While we support the administration's request for additional resources for the Disaster Relief Fund, we also request language be included that establishes a three year statute of limitations for FEMA deobligations under Public Assistance and Individual Assistance. Local governments and its people should not have to worry that the lifesaving assistance the federal government provided might be unnecessarily clawed back a decade from now. Additionally, we request an increase to the Disaster Assistance Direct Loan Program, which is used to provide community disaster loans to local governments that have suffered a substantial loss of tax revenue and need federal financial assistance in order to perform their responsibilities. Finally, we ask for needed flexibility in administrating such assistance.

- **Health and Human Services:** The number of natural disasters this year, coupled with years of natural attrition and the hiring freeze, have created a shortfall of approximately 2,000 personnel within the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Preparedness and Response (ASPR). As a result, ASPR has exhausted its personnel available to respond and does not have the necessary resources to respond to another natural disaster this year, and it is unclear that members of Disaster Medical Assistance Teams (DMATs) will be able to prolong their service this year beyond the typical 14 days. With two months of hurricane season remaining, it is necessary to give ASPR limited direct hiring authority for a short duration of time to fill this personnel shortfall. This authority is included in S. 1865.

  Additionally, the medical caches and equipment that have been exhausted must be replenished. This includes DMAT and pharmaceutical caches, and mobile lifesaving kits, expected to cost $15 million. Further, additional resources for mosquito abatement are necessary to prevent vector-borne diseases. This requires $30 million in mosquito abatement and the ability for local cities, counties, and metropolitan consortiums to be

able to directly request this funding. This requires a legislative reauthorization and amendment included in S. 849, the Strengthening Mosquito Abatement for Safety and Health Act.
[REQUEST: $45 million]

- **Small Business Administration Disaster Loans Program**: In the wake of a major disaster, the Small Business Administration (SBA) provides low-interest disaster loans to businesses, private non-profit organizations, homeowners and renters. SBA loans are often the first form of federal disaster assistance available for individuals and business. Any additional emergency supplemental should appropriate additional resources for the Disaster Loans Program account.
[REQUEST: $450 million]

- **Economic Development Administration:** The Department of Commerce's Economic Development Administration (EDA) plays a crucial role in facilitating the delivery of economic assistance to local governments for long-term recovery planning, reconstruction and resiliency in response to presidentially declared disasters or emergencies. EDA grants, emphasize disaster resiliency to help mitigate the potential for economic hardship as a result of future weather events.
[REQUEST: $300 million]

We appreciate your thoughtful consideration of these needs, and your efforts to ensure our states and territories have adequate resources to recover and rebuild.

Sincerely,

Marco Rubio
U.S. Senator

Bill Nelson
U.S. Senator

Thomas J. Rooney
Member of Congress

Brian Mast
Member of Congress

Alcee L. Hastings
Member of Congress

Matt Gaetz
Member of Congress

Carlos Curbelo
Member of Congress

Ted Deutch
Member of Congress

Stephanie Murphy
Member of Congress

Frederica S. Wilson
Member of Congress

Dennis Ross
Member of Congress

Charlie Crist
Member of Congress

Al Lawson
Member of Congress

Vern Buchanan
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Francis Rooney
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Lois Frankel
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Gus Bilirakis
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Bill Posey
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Ron DeSantis
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