



One Hundred Fifteenth Congress
U.S. House of Representatives
Committee on Homeland Security
Washington, DC 20515

June 1, 2018

The Honorable Michael McCaul
Chairman
Committee on Homeland Security
H2-176 Ford House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman McCaul:

The 2017 hurricane season was one of the most active, costly, and dangerous to date.¹ Four named storms made landfall on U.S. soil, including three major hurricanes – Harvey, Irma, and Maria, resulting in thousands of lives lost, widespread, persistent power outages, and billions of dollars in property damage.

As the 2018 hurricane season begins today, many of our fellow Americans are still reeling from the impacts of Hurricane Maria. In Puerto Rico, there are still nearly 12,000 homes and businesses without power and the electrical grid remains unstable with periodic blackouts across the island.² Puerto Rico Governor Ricardo Rosello recently called the electric grid a “highly fragile and vulnerable system that really could suffer worse damage than it suffered with Maria in the face of another natural catastrophe.”³ Unfortunately, Federal forecasters say there's a 75 percent chance that the upcoming hurricane season will produce between five and nine hurricanes, making the prospect of another catastrophe on the island very real.⁴

As you know, the Committee received testimony on the Federal response to the 2017 hurricanes at a hearing on March 15, 2018, in Washington, D.C., but has not visited Puerto Rico since Maria struck the island. We did, however, travel to Cypress, Texas to hear directly from stakeholders

¹ "Billion-Dollar Weather and Climate Disasters: Overview." NOAA National Centers for Environmental Information (NCEI). 2018. Accessed May 30, 2018. <https://www.ncdc.noaa.gov/billions/>.

² Associated Press. "Puerto Rico Grid 'teetering' despite \$3.8 Billion Repair Job." WTOP. May 31, 2018. Accessed May 31, 2018. <https://wtop.com/latin-america/2018/05/puerto-rico-grid-teetering-despite-3-8-billion-repair-job/slide/1/>.

³ Manchester, Julia. "Officials Warn Puerto Rico Electric Grid Is Likely to Collapse in next Hurricane." The Hill. May 31, 2018. Accessed May 31, 2018. <http://thehill.com/blogs/blog-briefing-room/news/390039-officials-puerto-rico-electric-grid-likely-to-collapse-in-next>.

⁴ "Forecasters Predict a Near- or Above-normal 2018 Atlantic Hurricane Season." National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. May 24, 2018. Accessed May 31, 2018. <http://www.noaa.gov/media-release/forecasters-predict-near-or-above-normal-2018-atlantic-hurricane-season>.

about response and recovery efforts to Hurricane Harvey, which was very informative for Members of the Committee. Visiting Puerto Rico would be similarly beneficial to the Committee's oversight functions as the 2018 hurricane season begins, particularly given the vulnerability of the island's infrastructure to another storm.

Therefore, I urge you to convene a site visit and/or field hearing in Puerto Rico so Members of the Committee can learn more about the ongoing response and recovery to Hurricane Maria and preparations for the upcoming hurricane season.

I look forward to working with you on this request. If you or your staff have any questions or concerns, please contact Alison Northrop, Chief Director for Oversight, at 202-226-2616.

Sincerely,



BENNIE G. THOMPSON
Ranking Member