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March 25, 2019

The Honorable Mitch McConnell, Jr.  
Majority Leader  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Charles Schumer  
Minority Leader  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Majority Leader McConnell and Minority Leader Schumer,

This letter is written to you on behalf of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) and Catholic Charities USA (CCUSA). In the wake of disasters, the U.S. Catholic Church offers prayers and concrete action for those who are suffering. Catholic Charities USA, the national office for 167 Catholic Charities agencies across all fifty states and the U.S. territories, is the official domestic disaster relief agency of the U.S. Catholic Church. We urge you to support a robust supplemental aid package to assist the regions reeling from natural disasters.

In collaboration with local bishops and with the support of the USCCB, Catholic Charities agencies mobilize in the wake of disasters to provide assistance to those in the greatest need, helping hundreds of thousands of survivors every year. Communities are served by us in the immediate aftermath of a disaster by providing emergency assistance and crisis counseling. We remain with these communities on the long road to recovery by providing disaster case management. As such, the challenges survivors face in rebuilding their lives are seen firsthand and the need for help and resources always far outstrips what is available. CCUSA provided over \$20 million in assistance over the past year and helped more than 400,000 people recovering from disasters. The President of the USCCB, Cardinal Daniel DiNardo, called for a special collection to address the humanitarian and pastoral impact from Hurricane Florence and other disasters in 2018. Nearly \$5 million dollars have been contributed thus far. However, the demand for assistance surpasses the availability of resources.

Without swift action from Congress, millions of survivors remain susceptible to malnutrition and housing instability. Our brothers and sisters in Puerto Rico remain in particularly dire straits from the combination of the wreckage from the hurricanes and the economic crisis.

As you consider priorities for the disaster supplemental it is critical to:

- Robustly fund HUD's Community Development Block Grant Disaster Recovery (CDBG-DR) for 2018-19 Disasters such as Hurricane Florence, Northern California Wildfires, Hurricane Michael, Hawaii Lava Flow and flooding, and the recent Alabama tornadoes;
- Provide at least \$610 million in Nutritional Assistance Program (NAP) for Puerto Rico;
- Provide tax relief for hurricane survivors, allowing them to access their 401K plans and pensions with no penalty and to refill the plans without penalty; and
- Activate the Disaster Housing Assistance Program (DHAP).

Local churches and Catholic Charities agencies continue to stand with the families of those recovering from disasters over the past year. We urge you to stand with us and support a robust disaster recovery package.

Sincerely,

Most Reverend Frank J. Dewane  
Bishop of Venice  
Chairman  
Committee on Domestic Justice and  
Human Development

Sr. Donna Markham, OP, Ph.D.  
President and CEO  
Catholic Charities USA