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September 28, 2017

President Trump
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Ave NW
Washington, DC 20050

Dear President Trump:

On behalf of the Congressional Black Caucus, I write today to bring to your attention the urgent needs of American citizens living on the United States Virgin Islands. It is my sincere concern that the magnitude of the devastation far outweighs the capacity of local authorities to adequately respond and requires a massive influx of federal resources to protect the health and wellbeing of thousands of vulnerable families. Moreover, it is my understanding that Delegate Plaskett and her constituents feel they have been neglected by the level of response to date.

The people of the Virgin Islands need all the help they can get after suffering direct hits from two Category 5 hurricanes in the span of just 12 days. Hurricanes Irma and Maria were responsible for at least seven deaths in the Virgin Islands. Days after landfall, our fellow American citizens are still confronting life-threatening conditions. The lone hospital on St. Thomas was destroyed by Hurricane Irma and the main hospital on St. Croix can only provide emergency services with one operating room. More than 90 percent of the three islands remain without power and it will likely take months to fully restore it. There are serious problems with distributing essential supplies leaving people desperate for food and water. Families lack safe and sustainable shelter.

This is unacceptable. As a native of New Orleans, I lived through Hurricane Katrina and bear the scars of the complete failure of federal, state, and local officials to adequately respond in the aftermath. So I am keenly sensitive to the needs of families still reeling from the destruction of natural disasters and the critical importance of a swift and efficient federal response.

The United States Virgin Islands need our help and they need it now. I urge you to immediately provide supplies and medical equipment, including medical ships, and assist rescue and evacuation efforts. I urge you to provide desperately-needed manpower to get supplies out of containers and into the hands of the people who need them. I also urge you to utilize all available resources to provide short- and long-term shelter for displaced Americans, including creative, previously

successful means, such as cruise ships and flotels. Lastly, due to the unique challenges facing the territory, I urge you to appoint a central coordinating official for disaster response and recovery efforts in the United States Virgin Islands. One coordinating official responsible for assessing the needs on the ground and organizing interagency resources will help ensure the most efficient response.

I sincerely hope you will seriously consider these recommendations for the sake of our fellow citizens. Delegate Stacey Plaskett is a tireless champion of her constituents and both her and I stand ready and willing to provide insight into the needs on the islands and how to best execute disaster recovery.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'C. Richmond', with a large, sweeping flourish at the end.

Cedric Richmond
Chair, Congressional Black Caucus