

LEFT IN THE DARK

AN ACTION PLAN FOR PUERTO RICO'S FUTURE
100 DAYS AFTER HURRICANE MARIA

BRONX BOROUGH PRESIDENT RUBEN DIAZ JR.



DECEMBER 2017

Dear Friend:

Hurricane Maria has done unimaginable damage to Puerto Rico. The people of the island—nearly 3.5 million American citizens—have gone without basic necessities such as power, food, medical supplies and other critical items that we take for granted. One hundred days since the storm struck the island, the progress of the recovery remains slow.

This report, “Left In The Dark: An Action Plan for Puerto Rico’s Future 100 Days After Hurricane Maria,” presents an action plan for New York City, New York State and the federal government to assist in the recovery of Puerto Rico in a coordinated fashion. In the absence of a strong response from President Trump and his administration on behalf of the commonwealth and its people, it is up to others to craft the agenda for the island’s recovery.

I am proud of my Puerto Rican heritage, and I am proud of the relief efforts that my office and so many others have undertaken to assist the residents of the island. In late September, immediately following Hurricane Maria’s destruction of Puerto Rico, my office organized a tremendous relief effort for the island.



The response was nothing short of overwhelming. Throughout the day hundreds of volunteers helped to move and pack hundreds of thousands of pounds of goods to support relief efforts for Puerto Rico, filling four shipping containers and more than two dozen trucks. So much material was donated at the event that it took two days to completely pack and move all items, and the National Guard was called in to help move donations off the street.

Similar relief efforts have taken place all over the nation, and they are welcome. But Puerto Rico needs a more focused, coordinated plan for its recovery. This report seeks to provide just that.

Thank you for your interest in the future of Puerto Rico.

Puerto Rico se levanta.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Ruben Diaz Jr." Below the signature, the name "Ruben Diaz Jr." is printed in a smaller, sans-serif font.

Ruben Diaz Jr.

INTRODUCTION

As we observe the passing of the hundredth day since Hurricane Maria ravaged Puerto Rico, causing an estimated \$100 billion in damage, the evidence is abundantly clearⁱ: the federal government is failing our fellow Americans. Despite the Island having a pre-storm population greater than that of 21 states, Puerto Rico is not getting the help it needs and deserves.ⁱⁱ

Since the outset, the Federal government's response in Puerto Rico has been, at best, problematic and, at worst, a complete abandonment of the responsibilities of the federal government to its citizens. The general size of the storm, the state of Puerto Rico's weak and antiquated energy grid, the Island's poor infrastructure and considerable elderly population were well known quantities prior to the storm's arrival. The Island's inability to withstand an impending storm of this magnitude should have been highly foreseeable. Yet in Puerto Rico, it took 10 days for 4,500 U.S. troops to arrive.ⁱⁱⁱ

As a benchmark consider the 2010 Haitian earthquake, when 8,000 U.S. troops were deployed to the island within two days of the disaster.^{iv} At a minimum, Puerto Rico should have received a response time on par with that of Haiti, preferably the military should have arrived prior to the storm reaching ground to attempt to mitigate physical damage. This finding is especially disturbing because the Federal Emergency Management Agency ("FEMA") is specifically designed to supplement, not serve in lieu of, local and state disaster response efforts. Hence, it wasn't sensible to rely on an already over extended FEMA^v to be a lead in Puerto Rico because its municipalities and the Commonwealth overall had limited capacity and ability to provide the initial relief response.^{vi} The military should have been deployed far earlier and with greater numbers and resources to be the frontline the local government was not equipped to provide.

Furthermore, in response to reports by CNN, *The New York Times* and others, on December 18, 2017, Puerto Rico Governor Ricardo Rosselló ordered a recount of the official death count, which was 62 but is now believed to be over 1,000 persons.^{vii} This dramatic revision in the number of casualties further emphasizes that the response to this tragedy was faulted and that mitigation efforts, both in the aftermath of this disaster and for the future, must be explored.

Although Texas and Florida have received substantial congressional funding for disaster relief, a minuscule fraction of the funds the Island desperately needs to address the humanitarian, energy, economic and health care crisis it faces have been allocated. Moreover, Puerto Rico has not received the \$4.9 billion in loans promised by the U.S.

Treasury which are needed to ensure the basic continuity of government operations.^{viii} As of December 8, 2017, Island officials confirmed no Puerto Rican entity has received any portion of the funds, which were requested for basic functions like making government payroll. Furthermore, its electric company, PREPA, and water utility, PRASA, are projected to run out of money by year's end.^{ix}

Modernizing and turning around PREPA and PRASA is vital and fundamental to Puerto Rico's recovery. PREPA is responsible for \$9 billion of Puerto Rico's massive debt.^x Power delivery on the Island remains inconsistent. Media reports range but generally demonstrates about a third of the Island is still without reliable power which impacts homes, schools and businesses.^{xi} New York Gov. Andrew M. Cuomo and Puerto Rico Gov. Ricardo Rosselló have urged Congress to pass a \$94.4 billion hurricane recovery package, more than \$17 billion of which would fund the revitalization and updating the Island's demolished power grid.^{xii} Unfortunately, this desperately needed work has not moved forward in part because it would require an immediate exemption from the Stafford Act to allow FEMA to replace damaged power infrastructure with more resilient and sustainable equipment and improve the grid.^{xiii}

"The White House argues that the Stafford Act of 1988 allows the federal government to rebuild only what existed in Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands before the hurricanes. That means rebuilding exposed, fossil fuel-dependent grids that are vulnerable to the sea level rise and violent storms that are expected to become more common as climate change worsens will not change."^{xiv}

Adding to the almost endless list of problems is the Island's ongoing housing crisis. Approximately 472,000 homes were destroyed or badly damaged during Hurricane Maria.^{xv} About one-third of Puerto Rican homeowners are behind on their mortgage payments to banks and investment firms that previously bought up distressed mortgages. Reports indicate that 90,000 borrowers became delinquent in their mortgages as a consequence of Hurricane Maria.^{xvi} "Puerto Rico's 35 percent foreclosure and delinquency rate is more than double the 14.4 percent national rate during the depths of the housing implosion in January 2010."^{xvii} The experts expect a prolific increase in foreclosure actions once the moratorium imposed by the Department of Housing and Urban Development ("HUD") on the more than 117,000 mortgages it insures expires in 2018.^{xviii}

Aggressive foreclosure tactics by Blackstone Real Estate Advisors LP ("Blackstone"), via its subsidiary Finance of America, were recently featured in *The New York Times*.^{xix} It noted when "Finance of America sells a foreclosed home for less than the value of the mortgage, the firm can make a claim to the insurance fund to make up the difference. In that case, taxpayers would be on the hook."^{xx} Nevertheless, what makes this

development even more egregious is that Blackstone has received hundreds of millions in pension dollars from the New York City Retirement System (“NYCRS”). Pension dollars must not be used to further victimize the people of Puerto Rico. Consequently, steps need to be made taken to hold Blackstone and other institutional investors accountable and negotiating in good faith. Ultimately, mortgage modification programs and other relief will need to be made available.

Problems in Puerto Rico will be compounded by the partisan tax legislation just passed in Congress.^{xxi} The tax law failed to incorporate provisions aimed at alleviating Puerto Rico’s financial crisis.^{xxii} The legislation will impose a 12.5 percent tax on the income from intellectual property of mainland companies in Puerto Rico, as in foreign countries.^{xxiii} The Puerto Rican government asserts that failing to make an exception in this matter for Puerto Rico will endanger thousands of jobs on the island, as, with this tax, companies may move to foreign countries with lower manufacturing costs.^{xxiv} U.S. mainland companies make up approximately one third of Puerto Rico’s tax base and directly or indirectly employ approximately 250,000 Americans, according to the Puerto Rican government.^{xxv}

Puerto Rico needs sufficient Federal funding following the recent natural disaster. Additionally, the following policies should be implemented as soon as possible:

1. CREATION OF A NEW OVERSIGHT PANEL ON PUERTO RICO RELIEF EFFORTS

The gravity of the situation facing Puerto Rico and its people cannot be understated. Though individual efforts to assist the commonwealth have been welcome, evidence on the ground makes it crystal clear that a more organized response, involving all levels of government, must be implemented.

To that end, this report calls for the creation of an oversight panel to coordinate relief efforts between New York City, New York State and the federal government. This panel would be comprised of elected officials, the business and non-profit leaders, infrastructure experts, healthcare representatives and more.

Acting in concert, the panel would guide relief efforts in both the short and long term, in order to best address the needs to the people of Puerto Rico while also adjusting where relief is allocated based on as those needs change.

2. CREATE THE PUERTO RICO EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS REGISTRY

Relevant agencies should gather specialized information from Puerto Rico residents regarding their special needs for evacuation and shelter planning and form a registry. This registry would be designed to identify residents who may require special assistance during an evacuation, and the special resources they may require during sheltering. The registry should do the following:

- Identify what geographic areas are most vulnerable and create evacuation plans that account for the vulnerability of the special needs residents in those areas and in all other areas of the island.
- Collaborate across hospitals, wellness centers, the local departments of health, local elected officials, advocacy groups, hospice, dialysis centers, schools, in-home attendants, and other CBO's to assist with the data collection. In addition, post the special needs registry survey online to try to catch residents who may not be connected to a provider.

3. VOLUNTEER TOURISM FROM NEW YORK STATE

Tourism accounted for about eight percent of Puerto Rico's GDP in 2016, or \$8.1bn.^{xxvi} New York State should create a centralized portal for volunteer tourism where New York State residents can sign up to do projects in Puerto Rico in their free time in the next Fiscal Year's budget. New York State should facilitate the projects and make sure they are meeting the needs of the people of Puerto Rico. New Yorkers would be required to pay a relatively low-cost fee to cover the cost of service. Volunteer tourism serves to both accomplish important volunteer goals and to stimulate the economy of the Island. The program should utilize the New York Cares model as well as partnerships with airlines to transport volunteer groups. Either state or federal tax credits/deductions should be permissible for those that have demonstrated that their service benefitted those in need in Puerto Rico.

4. THE CITY OF NEW YORK SHOULD OPEN OFFICES IN PUERTO RICO PROVIDING SERVICES

New York City should open offices in San Juan and Ponce offering assistance with family unification, providing a safe environment in which to receive funds and other goods sent from relatives, providing auxiliary social support and aiding in the prevention of identity theft. There is precedent for U.S. non-Federal government offices in Puerto Rico. In 2015, New York opened a state office in Puerto Rico to strengthen economic ties between New York State and the Island. Strategic collaboration between the City of New

York and the government Puerto Rico dates back to the 1949; Mayor O'Dwyer formed the Mayor's Committee on Puerto Rican Affairs (MCPRA) which partnered with the then Migration Division of Puerto Rico's Department of Labor.^{xxvii}

5. PROPOSAL: A NATIONWIDE SISTER CITY PROGRAM

Cities in the 50 United States must begin to pledge to volunteer to provide temporary shelter for victims of the hurricanes in Puerto Rico, whose homes are currently without clean running water and power. The proposed Sister City Program will be especially helpful in areas in the 50 States and the District of Columbia with existing large Puerto Rican populations so that people seeking refuge from bad conditions after the storms can be near family and social networks. For example, Orlando, Florida could be a "Sister City" with Ponce, and or Chicago, Illinois could be a "Sister City" with Bayamón. Further, cities seeking additions to their workforce would benefit. The Federal Government should reimburse cities for this additional temporary housing provided to Puerto Rico hurricane victims.

6. ADOPT A TOWN IN PUERTO RICO

With so many Puerto Ricans living off the island that identify with individual towns, we are proposing the creation of an "Adopt a Town" program for individual persons and families to support the towns and cities in Puerto Rico that they have a strong connection with. Efforts to reach towns that have been isolated following the storm have garnered much support from residents outside the island. Such efforts work to ensure that supplies and resources are going directly to support relief efforts in difficult to reach communities. The "Adopt a Town" program would coordinate businesses and individuals that are already providing support to families in their towns and streamline the donation processes.

7. A REPOSITORY OF VITAL DOCUMENTS SHOULD BE CREATED FOR PUERTO RICO OUTSIDE OF THE ISLAND

As noted above, many residents do not have access to vital documents as they have been lost or unable to salvage them due to Hurricane Maria. The creation of a repository of vital documents, such as the vital records already held by the New York City Department of Health, should be replicated to serve those on the Island. This will also in the long term allow for Puerto Ricans that have remained in New York City to continue to have access to records that are crucial for moving forward in their recovery. This repository may also include property records so that should another disaster befall the Island they are easily retrievable.

8. THE NEW YORK STATE DEPARTMENT OF LABOR SHOULD EXPAND ITS INITIATIVES TO REACH OUT TO AND INCORPORATE PUERTO RICAN ARRIVALS

The New York State Department of Labor has had tremendous success driving unemployment down in The Bronx and elsewhere, and should expand outreach initiatives to best incorporate new arrivals from Puerto Rico with outreach materials in English and Spanish. BronxWorks is doing laudable employment work in The Bronx, and their services should be expanded and replicated. The incoming workforce should be offered skill assessments and trainings to facilitate offers of employment and job placement. Moreover, new arrivals should be directed to a mechanism that expedites the transfer and or conversion of documents such as driver's licenses, and or other credentials, to accelerate integration into the workforce.

9. INTAKE SERVICES IN NEW YORK CITY SHOULD BE PLACED IN AREAS WHERE THEY ARE NEEDED MOST

In addition to the resources announced by the Governor and the Mayor, resources for Puerto Ricans who have newly arrived in New York should be located in neighborhoods where they can be the most easily accessed including throughout The Bronx, Bushwick, East New York, Sunset Park, East Harlem, the Lower East Side, and Ridgewood, Queens. These intake centers should be modeled on the "Single Stop" model of service provision where attorneys participate in intake at community centers and other convenient locations. Post-storm service provision should be staffed by social work, legal, and healthcare staff.

Moreover our City has five intake centers to enter into the shelter system:

- Families with Children - Prevention Assistance and Temporary Housing (PATH), 151 E. 151st Street, Bronx, NY 10451
- Adult Family Intake Center (AFIC), 400-430 E. 30th Street, New York, NY 10016
- Single Adults Men: 30th Street Intake Center, 400-430 East 30th Street, New York, NY 10016
- Single Adult Women: HELP Women's Shelter, 116 Williams Avenue, Brooklyn, NY 11217
- Single Adult Women: Franklin Shelter, 1122 Franklin Avenue, Bronx, NY 10456

Dedicated staff should be trained and strategically placed within each facility to respond to displaced Puerto Rican arrivals. Additionally, the NYC DHS' Prevention Assistance and Temporary Housing (PATH) otherwise known as the only Emergency

Assistance Unit (EAU), should enhance their services to include the processing of benefits, including but not limited to SNAP, Medicaid and rental assistance.

10. MEDICAL INTAKE KIOSKS IN NEW YORK CITY SHOULD BE SET UP ACROSS NEW YORK CITY HOSPITALS

Setting up bilingual intake-kiosks in New York City hospitals and health centers would provide support for Puerto Ricans in need of medical attention. The lack of available medical treatment in Puerto Rico is contributing to the exodus of its residents. On-site hospital kiosks will help to ensure care coordination, prescription refills, and insurance authorization and other services.

11. FEMA PROCESSES AND REJECTIONS OF CLAIMS IN PUERTO RICO MUST BE RECTIFIED

There are widespread reports of unjust denials of FEMA claims in Puerto Rico. Consequently, some New York City legal service providers, including the New York Legal Assistance Group, Legal Services Corp., the Legal Aid Society, the New York City Bar Association and LatinoJustice PRLDEF are assisting with FEMA-related legal support and/or organizing appeals clinics.^{xxviii} However, we suspect that there are many individuals who will not seek any legal assistance after receiving a FEMA denial.

As a result of advocacy efforts,^{xxix} the FEMA filing deadline to register for individual and household assistance aid was extended to March 20, 2018. However, the process remains fraught with administrative and inspection delays and fraud concerns, among other problems. For example, a Department of Homeland Security, Office of Inspector General management alert issued on December 11, 2017, found substantial evidence of bogus FEMA notices. It concluded “FEMA and its partners must be diligent in identifying and preventing ways by which disaster survivors may be manipulated and exploited.”[ii]

Moreover, given that many essential documents, like birth certificates, identifications, and titles were destroyed or lost, it will take time to replace them as the government resources that would provide these replacements in Puerto Rico have also diminished.

FEMA should widely publicize its policies and rules in English and Spanish, in particular those that are leading to denials and appeals in Puerto Rico, for public scrutiny. Overall, FEMA must do better across the board to understand the unique situation that Puerto Rico is in, and show flexibility in its policies to match the realities on the Island. The FEMA filing deadline for aid has been extended into March 2018.

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12. FOOD ASSISTANCE/PUBLIC ASSISTANCE BENEFITS MUST BE PROVIDED MORE BROADLY AND EFFICIENTLY

The feasibility of accepting Puerto Rico’s food assistance program (NAP) in the 50 states and Washington, D.C. should be assessed to cut down on bureaucracy and paperwork for those fleeing post-storm conditions. The allocation of benefits should also be comparable to what is offered in the states. Additionally, clothing vouchers should match the need in light of Island refugees moving to colder climates.

13. HOMELAND SECURITY MUST IMPLEMENT AN EXTENDED JONES ACT WAIVER FOR SHIPPING

The Jones Act mandates that goods shipped between U.S. ports are transported on ships owned, operated, and built by Americans. The Jones Act should be waived for the remainder of the recovery efforts through 2018 in order to maximize efficiency and abundance of deliveries by ship. Ultimately, the Jones Act must be repealed.

14. NEW YORK STATE SHOULD WAIVE THE RESIDENCY REQUIREMENT FOR THE NEW YORK STATE EXCELSIOR PROGRAM AND THE NEW YORK STATE TUITION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

In addition, a single web portal should be created through which students can immediately apply to enroll at colleges and universities in New York. Also, allow admissions staff from participating universities the ability to make a special trip to visit Puerto Rico to advertise the program and provide application materials. For those students seeking to complete their degrees in the states, scholarships to cover the costs of travel and housing should be considered.

15. DOE MUST STEP UP TO PROVIDE MORE ADDITIONAL SERVICES TO STUDENTS IN NEED COMING FROM PUERTO RICO

Additional teacher training must be implemented in areas seeing an influx of students from Puerto Rico and additional resources for school counselors should be allocated according to need in response to the expected large influx of Puerto Rican students in the city. Allocations of supplementary counseling staff should reflect the numbers of students matriculating into the school district as a result of the hurricanes. Mentoring and/or tutoring programs should also be made available to students in order to ensure their smooth integration into the school system.

16. UTILIZE SERVICE MEMBERS: PREVENTING CRIME AND DISTRIBUTING NEEDED SUPPLIES SUCH AS WATER

The United States Armed Forces should continue be utilized to assist with the distribution of goods in the wake of this disaster to assure that they are getting to those who need them. The Federal Government should also utilize the National Guard as needed in response to conditions of chaos to address the looting that has followed the storm in some areas. Prior to the storm, Puerto Rico already had the second worst murder rate in the nation.^{xxxii}

Additionally, the police force in Puerto Rico has lost approximately 4,000 officers in the past five years and reportedly lacks sufficient new recruit prospects.^{xxxiii} An accounting of the supplies received for relief and their disbursement should be made public. Additionally, the timelines for distribution should be shared to ensure that goods from relief efforts are distributed efficiently and expediently. An assessment of needs not met should also be included so that additional resources can be allocated.

17. NEW YORK CITY MUST PROVIDE EDUCATION ABOUT AVAILABLE HOUSING SERVICES

U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (“HUD”), New York City Department of Housing Preservation and Development (“HPD”) and New York City Housing Development Corporation (“HDC”) should conduct outreach sessions on how to apply for affordable housing to those newly arrived from Puerto Rico following the storm and should make those programs accessible to those living with family or in other temporary housing conditions. Individuals placed into the shelter system should be provided with access to Living in Communities (LINC) Rent Program^{xxxiv} vouchers so that they can obtain housing.

18. GENERATORS SHOULD BE EFFICIENTLY PROVIDED AND THE POWER GRID RESTORED IN PUERTO RICO

Generators are still badly needed in Puerto Rico. Estimates are that power will not be restored until February 2018.^{xxxiv} The maintenance of power at medical facilities through the use of federally provided generators should be a priority. The advice of engineers in Puerto Rico to focus on restoring strategic power facilities should also be given weight in the decision of how to best allocate resources so as to restore power as soon as possible throughout the Island. The Federal Government's disaster response needs to better enable people to keep their food refrigerated and meet other life sustaining needs with power.

An immediate free generator program strategically prioritizing points of need where food can be kept cool in neighborhoods and people can get relief from heat should be implemented while the power grid is restored.^{xxxv} An exchange/replacement program needs to be instituted for those generators that have failed so that residents are turning in outdated or burnt out generators, as opposed to putting people at risk with sales of falsely refurbished and inoperable devices.

19. PUERTO RICO MUST END ITS DEPENDENCE ON OIL AND COAL FOR POWER

Puerto Rico's power grid is obviously vulnerable to natural disaster. According to the U.S. Energy Information Administration, Puerto Rico relies mostly on fossil fuels for energy and has a coal electricity plant as well. Among other initiatives to cut dependence on coal and oil, funds should be allocated to provide solar panels, as per Elon Musk's proposal about which *The Economist* recently reported Puerto Rico's Governor is enthusiastic but needs resources to implement.^{xxxvi} Exploring other resources, such as wind turbines along the coast, would also add to diversification of fuel sources.

20. A COMPREHENSIVE RECYCLING PROGRAM MUST BE IMPLEMENTED BY THE U.S. ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY

The EPA has previously stated as recently as in a September 2016 document^{xxxvii} that it would work with the Puerto Rico Solid Waste Management Authority on recycling and composting programs. Open landfills operating beyond their capacity has been a recent problem in Puerto Rico. "Puerto Rico's Solid Waste Authority estimates that the powerful hurricane created 6.2 million cubic yards of waste and debris. That's enough

trash to fill about 43 football stadiums with piles of waste eight stories high, according to a measure used by FEMA.”^{xxxviii}

With all the additional waste as a result of this storm from bottled water and debris, the EPA’s help with a recycling program in Puerto Rico is all the more crucial and should be taken on by the EPA in addition to efforts the EPA has reportedly undertaken to assist with drinking water analysis and assessment of oil and chemical facilities and EPA-led superfund sites. Much like the brownfield remediation that is being done throughout New York City, these properties should be scheduled for treatments expeditiously as the tropical nature of the Island and its ecosystem are intertwined.

21. PROVIDE AUTOMATIC ENROLLMENT INTO THE EXCELSIOR SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM FOR CURRENT AND FUTURE STUDENTS COMING FROM PUERTO RICO

Expand Gov. Cuomo’s Excelsior Scholarship to allow displaced Puerto Rican students to attend a SUNY or CUNY college tuition-free, whether part time or full time. Collaboration should be undergone across SUNY and CUNY registrar offices to streamline the application process. In line with the sister cities approach, colleges in Puerto Rico and New York should work together to formalize exchange and or visiting student programs, in order to achieve the best outcome for the students for those that remain in New York or return to Puerto Rico. These programs should emphasize and provide support for student internships, allowing for future employment. Moreover, Puerto Rico should consider a similar program for its public universities to support the future students of the Island and retain its talent pool, in addition to encouraging new students to study on the Island.

22. POST HURRICANE PUBLIC HEALTH CRISIS

The devastation in Puerto Rico as a result of Hurricane Maria has created a public health crisis. There is a shortage of medical supplies and clean drinking water and increasing potential for severe mold growth. With only 66 percent^{xxxix} of the island’s residents having access to power, Puerto Ricans are heavily dependent on generators for electricity. The additional caveat, generators are dependent on a consistent fuel supply to remain in operation, thus patients dependent on powered medical devices are at an extremely high risk for further complications.

Patients throughout the Island, are vulnerable to supply shortages and power outages that ultimately are impacting their health and putting their lives at risk. Respirators, dialysis machines, ventilators and beyond are dependent on electricity to keep people alive. Vulnerable areas throughout the Island, especially those with operating medical

facilities should receive an abundance of oil reserves and replacement generators in effort to maintain systems of care until the power grid can be restored. Power grids associated with hospitals and medical centers should be prioritized.

A special needs registry must be created so that residents that have lifesaving devices that require electricity are prioritized, similar to what ConEdison does here.

23. PASS THE WAIVER OF EMERGENCY PAYMENTS ACT

Given its economic state, Puerto Rico should not be required to pay the costs to the Federal Government of the recent natural disaster.

24. INCREASE MEDICAL SUPPLIES AND MEDICINE

Medical clinics and hospitals need a constant stream of supplies and medicines. In addition, sweltering heat and a lack of storage space puts certain medications and supplies at risk of being damaged. Distribution of needed medication should be expedited to those in need through the use of the National Guard when emergency conditions warrant it. Many residents in areas not sufficiently addressed by relief efforts have not been receiving medication in a timely fashion, as they do not have the means to get to the clinics.

25. PROVIDE MOLD REMEDIATION SUBSIDIES FOR RESIDENCES AND BUSINESSES WITHOUT INSURANCE

The prevalence of water damage coupled in the humidity rich climate of Puerto Rico is a recipe for mold growth. Mold exposure can lead to adverse health effects, especially in people with underlying respiratory issues. Buildings without access to insurance or should receive mold remediation subsidies in an effort to curb mold growth.

26. CREATE PARTNER MEDICAL NETWORKS

Puerto Rico lost 12 percent of its more than 10,000 medics and surgeons between 2005-2013. Prior to Maria, this exodus created a shortage of available medical professionals. Currently there are a number of dedicated medical professionals going to Puerto Rico on medical missions, many of which are organized by mainland cities, counties and independent groups. As the need for medical care continues to grow, mainland cities and counties should partner with Puerto Rico's department of health to send medical staff on a continuous and formalized basis to ensure that medical treatment is available across Puerto Rico.

27. INCREASE MEDICAID FUNDING TO PUERTO RICO

The federal government should increase Medicaid funding cap to Puerto Rico, to ensure that its residents receive adequate medical attention. About half of the 3.4 million people living in Puerto Rico rely on Medicaid. The 2018 projected Medicaid funding gap is \$880 million. Rates of reimbursement should be comparable to those in the United States. This would also go a long way in keeping medical personnel on the Island. As repeated stated by the Hispanic Federation: Approximately 1.5 million U.S. citizens in Puerto Rico depend on Medicaid. Puerto Ricans living on the Island are at risk of losing their healthcare if Congress fails to extend and increase the Island's Medicaid funding. Addressing Puerto Rico's Medicaid crisis immediately could save the federal government and states up to \$24 billion over the next ten years.

28. MOSQUITO SURVEILLANCE

The CDC website states that floodwater can lead to large populations of mosquitos. In addition, the CDC mentions that the types of mosquitoes that can spread viruses may increase two weeks to two months after a hurricane.

Mosquito-borne diseases — such as dengue, chikungunya and Zika — have the potential to spread. The last Dengue outbreak in Puerto Rico was in 2010, with a total of 26,766 cases of suspected dengue infections reported. In 2016, there were 40,000 reported cases of the Zika. Repairing the damage to Puerto Rico's Island wide passive dengue surveillance system, will be vital to tracking the spread of Dengue.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention ("CDC") recommendations to prevent Dengue, call for mosquito proofing one's home, which include, using air conditioners to avoid opening windows and doors, and clearing standing water. In addition, any bins used to store water should be washed weekly to eradicate mosquito eggs. The current state of Puerto Rico, lends itself to rapid growth of mosquito populations. In addition, the limited function of hospitals and diagnostic centers coupled with a damaged surveillance system, make it extremely difficult to track the spread of mosquito borne illnesses.

Future planning for hurricane preparedness should include:

- Repair mosquito surveillance system
- Treat areas of standing water that cannot be completely drained with biological larvicides to kill the immature larval mosquitoes
- Provide window screens and bed nets to residents who cannot afford them or have access.

- Have population at risk tested for the dengue, chikungunya and Zika and take appropriate steps to treat those that have tested positive. Continue outreach to residents of the Island on the symptoms and need for proactive testing

ⁱ <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2017-12-08/puerto-rico-still-waiting-for-4-9-billion-from-u-s-treasury>

ⁱⁱ Puerto Rico is home to more than 3.4 million people, according to the US Census Bureau -- a population larger than 21 states, including Iowa, Arkansas and Nevada.

<http://www.cnn.com/2017/09/26/politics/puerto-rico-state-hurricane-maria/index.html>

ⁱⁱⁱ <https://www.npr.org/sections/thetwo-way/2017/12/18/571781560/u-s-handled-puerto-rico-hurricane-aftermath-badly-says-refugee-group>

^{iv} <https://www.npr.org/sections/thetwo-way/2017/12/18/571781560/u-s-handled-puerto-rico-hurricane-aftermath-badly-says-refugee-group>

^v <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/10/22/us/fema-texas-florida-delays-.html?>

^{vi} <https://www.npr.org/sections/thetwo-way/2017/12/18/571781560/u-s-handled-puerto-rico-hurricane-aftermath-badly-says-refugee-group>

^{vii} https://www.washingtonpost.com/national/puerto-rico-governor-orders-recount-of-death-toll/2017/12/18/2aa0ad5e-e401-11e7-ab50-621fe0588340_story.html?utm_term=.od7842e17f68

<http://www.cnn.com/2017/12/18/health/puerto-rico-maria-death-count-review/index.html>

https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2017/12/08/us/puerto-rico-hurricane-maria-death-toll.html?_r=2&mtrref=undefined

^{viii} <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2017-12-08/puerto-rico-still-waiting-for-4-9-billion-from-u-s-treasury>

^{ix} <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2017-12-08/puerto-rico-still-waiting-for-4-9-billion-from-u-s-treasury>

^x <http://www.nydailynews.com/opinion/flip-switch-puerto-rico-power-desperately-article-1.3702115>

^{xi} <https://www.pbs.org/newshour/show/thousands-of-puerto-ricans-still-in-the-dark-three-months-after-hurricane-maria>

^{xii} <https://www.amny.com/news/politics/puerto-rico-hurricane-aid-1.15420897>

^{xiii} <http://thehill.com/blogs/congress-blog/politics/363303-rebuilding-puerto-rico-and-the-us-virgin-islands-better-energy>

^{xiv} https://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/bernie-sanders-puerto-rico-reconstruction-bill_us_5a1cd15ce4b04e8b2a83ecob

^{xv} <https://www.npr.org/sections/thetwo-way/2017/12/18/571781560/u-s-handled-puerto-rico-hurricane-aftermath-badly-says-refugee-group>

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