



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Luis R. Sepúlveda

## Letter to Honorable Governor Andrew Cuomo on Priority Recommendations for Puerto Rico Task Force

SENATOR LUIS SEPÚLVEDA July 20, 2018

| ISSUE: **PUERTO RICO TASK FORCE**

Re: Priority Recommendations for Puerto Rico Task Force

Dear Governor Cuomo:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide input on policy initiatives which I believe will help alleviate the hardships caused by Hurricane Maria on Puerto Ricans. Your efforts on relief and recovery work on the island and here in New York are highly appreciated. Below are my priority recommendations that fall within the powers of our State government to implement:

1. I have drafted and introduced legislation which will authorize county social service districts to provide emergency rental and rent deposit assistance to any current Puerto Rican receiving FEMA assistance under its Transitional Shelter Assistance (TSA) program. The FEMA program ends later this month and will force into the streets more than 2,300 families and 9,000 island evacuees currently living in hotels throughout New York. Most do not have the financial ability to pay for a rental deposit and one-month rent required by property owners.
2. Have SUNY's Educational Opportunity Centers work directly with Puerto Ricans displaced by Hurricane Maria to provide them job training, English language instruction

and other workforce development services provided by EOCs. Directing immediate outreach by EOCs staff to evacuees living near one of these educational facilities can be accomplished by sharing FEMA's TSA participant list with the relevant outreach staff at the nearest EOC.

3. We are now in the 2018 Hurricane Season and having a program in place to help Puerto Ricans on the Island take steps to be more resilient to another possible storm like Maria is paramount. Disaster preparedness is a big problem across our nation and more so for low-income families as has been documented by Red Cross studies. It is important that residents of Puerto Rico be provided with bilingual information on developing a disaster preparedness plan for themselves and their families which include storing non-perishable food items, medication, clean water, flashlights and batteries and more.

Thank you again for this opportunity. I look forward to working with you on this and many more issues of concern to all New Yorkers and Puerto Rico.

Best Regards,

Luis Sepúlveda