

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

October 2, 2017

The Honorable Tony Tooke
Chief
USDA Forest Service
1400 Independence Ave, SW
Washington, DC 20250-1111

CC: The Honorable Sonny Purdue
Secretary
U.S. Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Ave., S.W.
Washington, DC 20250

RE: Request for Additional Chainsaw Teams in Puerto Rico and U.S. Virgin Islands

Dear Chief Tooke,

We write to you today regarding the destruction of Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands caused by Hurricanes Irma and Maria. As you are aware, these hurricanes recently devastated the Caribbean territories. They caused massive damage to infrastructure and left an enormous amount of dangerous debris.

It is our understanding that the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Forest Service has already deployed seventeen chainsaw teams and one Incident Management Team to the region to assist in debris removal and rescue efforts, with nine additional teams en route. However, the unprecedented devastation will require a vast amount of resources for the foreseeable future.

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) estimates debris at 1.4 million cubic yards in Puerto Rico and 1.1 million cubic yards in the U.S. Virgin Islands. Therefore, we urge you to direct the Forest Service to increase the number of chainsaw teams in Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands. It is important to provide the necessary federal assistance to clear the pathway to bring supplies and emergency assistance to our fellow citizens in their time of need.

Thank you in advance for your attention to this matter. If you have any questions or comments, do not hesitate to reach out to us.

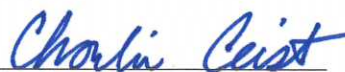
Sincerely,


Darren Soto

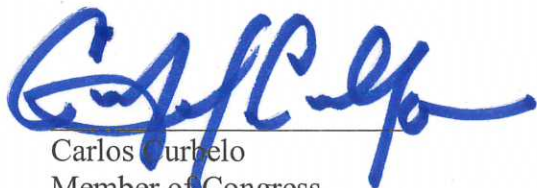
Member of Congress



Kathy Castor
Member of Congress



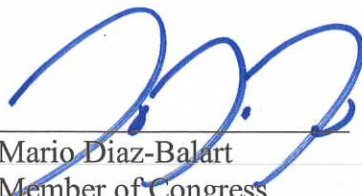
Charlie Crist
Member of Congress



Carlos Curbelo
Member of Congress



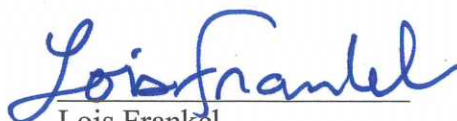
Ted Deutch
Member of Congress



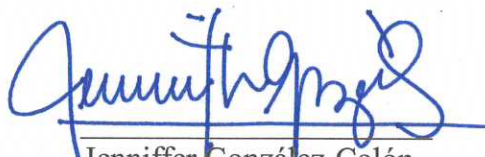
Mario Diaz-Balart
Member of Congress



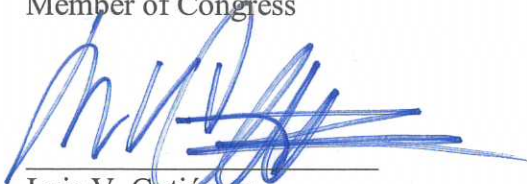
Adriano Espaillat
Member of Congress



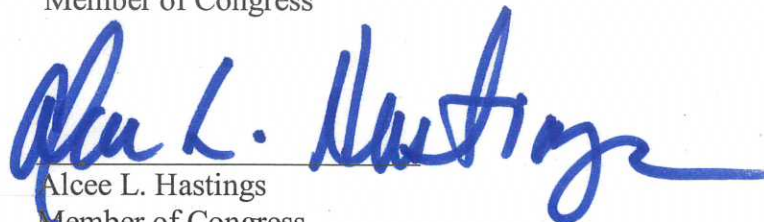
Lois Frankel
Member of Congress



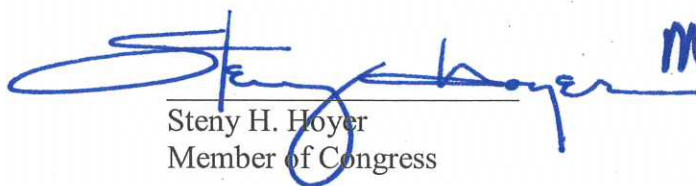
Jennifer González-Colón
Member of Congress



Luis V. Gutiérrez
Member of Congress



Alcee L. Hastings
Member of Congress



Steny H. Hoyer
Member of Congress



Michelle Lujan Grisham
Member of Congress



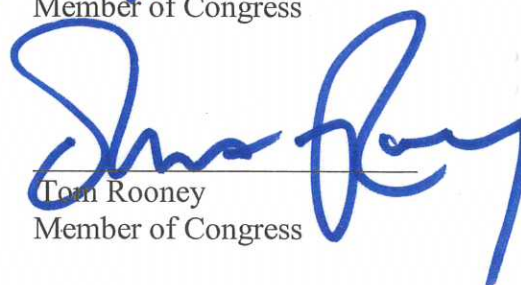
Stephanie Murphy
Member of Congress



Stacey Plaskett
Member of Congress



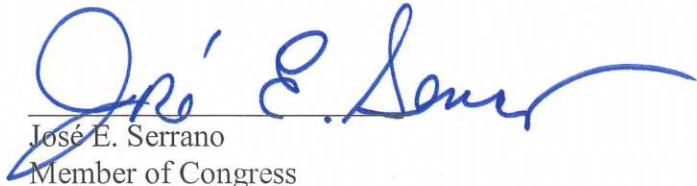
Ileana Ros-Lehtinen
Member of Congress



Tom Rooney
Member of Congress



Dennis A. Ross
Member of Congress



José E. Serrano
Member of Congress



Nydia M. Velázquez
Member of Congress



Debbie Wasserman Schultz
Member of Congress