

Honorable Janet Napolitano
Secretary
U.S. Department of Homeland Security
301 7th Street SW
Washington, DC 20582

Mr. William Fugate
Administrator
Federal Emergency Management Agency
500 C Street SW, Room 714
Washington, DC 20472

Dear Secretary Napolitano and Administrator Fugate,

We write to you with great concern over a significant lapse in eligibility for Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) disaster recovery aid for housing cooperatives and condominiums.

We applaud the efforts of FEMA and the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) in responding to the needs of our constituents, and all those impacted by Superstorm Sandy. The devastation suffered as a result of this storm was staggering, and the recovery effort has been immense. You have come to the aid of those in need, and we are sincere in expressing our gratitude.

However, some of FEMA's own interpretations of the Stafford Act seem to be getting in the way of common sense assistance that is needed throughout the region. As you know, housing cooperative and condominium associations are currently ineligible for FEMA's Individual and Households program (IHP) because they are misclassified as commercial business associations. This could not be farther from the practical reality that these entities are homes, and should be viewed as such.

Throughout our various districts in the affected region, thousands of our residents live in housing cooperatives and condominiums. Many of them were subject to the same damage and need that people living in standalone residences suffered. Unfortunately, under current policy, while one would be eligible for assistance, the other would not. We believe this to be an area where FEMA has the authority to correct this oversight, and I would encourage you to move forward as soon as possible so that the people suffering without much needed assistance can rebuild in the most efficient way possible.

As we have seen with previous storms, the recovery effort will be long and require significant effort at all levels of government and the private sector. We look forward to working with you as we move forward to assure that the spirit of relief is not unintentionally lost in the process, and that where flexibility is due, changes can be made.

Again, we stand ready to work with DHS and FEMA to see that the good work you do benefits all who need it, and that misinterpreted policy does not get in the way of achievable solutions. We look forward to hearing from you at your earliest possible convenience.

Sincerely,