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United States Senate

COMMITTEE ON
ENERGY AND NATURAL RESOURCES

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-6150

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October 25, 2017

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Majority Leader
United States Senate
S-230, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Chuck Schumer
Minority Leader
United States Senate
S-221, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Majority Leader McConnell and Minority Leader Schumer:

As you consider ways to provide assistance for the people of Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands after the devastation brought by Hurricanes Irma and Maria, we respectfully request that infrastructure be rebuilt in a resilient and sustainable way that reduces the threat of damage from future disasters.

While immediate assistance should focus on essential supplies to protect the safety of individuals, over the long-term we should help rebuild infrastructure—like the electric grid—with modern technologies that are stronger and more resilient against extreme weather events. Hurricanes Irma and Maria exposed the vulnerability of the Puerto Rico and U.S. Virgin Islands electric grids to extreme weather with some communities projected to face months without reliable power. This is unacceptable.

Rebuilding the grid with modern technologies will improve reliability and can save residents money. Decentralized energy resources operating in microgrids are more likely to remain functioning during and after storms. There are many instances of distributed energy keeping important facilities online after natural disasters, including the Texas Medical Center, the largest medical complex in the world, which has a combined heat and power plant that kept running during Hurricane Harvey. The rapidly declining costs of distributed clean energy technologies like solar, wind, energy efficiency, and battery storage in many instances makes them more affordable than existing power generation.

Hurricanes Irma and Maria wreaked destruction and caused enormous human suffering in Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands. We believe that it is imperative that we provide the necessary federal assistance for the millions of Americans trying to recover. We also request that federal assistance allow communities to rebuild more resilient and sustainable infrastructure that is less vulnerable to extreme weather. Thank you for your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,

