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# United States Senate

COMMITTEE ON  
HOMELAND SECURITY AND GOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-6250

October 11, 2018

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The Honorable Gene L. Dodaro  
Comptroller General of the United States  
U.S. Government Accountability Office  
441 G St. NW  
Washington, DC 20548

Dear Mr. Dodaro:

I write to request a Government Accountability Office (GAO) review of the Disaster Housing Assistance Program (DHAP), which has been used in the past to provide disaster survivors with temporary rental assistance and case management services. DHAP was first used in 2005 following Hurricanes Katrina and Rita as a joint initiative undertaken by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). To participate in the program, disaster survivors applied for FEMA assistance and were then referred to HUD, which used its existing network of local Public Housing Agencies (PHAs) to administer and implement the program. PHAs placed disaster survivors into housing units and made rental assistance payments on behalf of eligible families to participating landlords. After several months of full subsidy, families were gradually required to increase their contributions toward rent, preparing them to assume full responsibility for their housing costs at the end of DHAP participation.

To date, DHAP has not been established in communities that are recovering from Hurricanes Harvey, Irma, Maria, Florence, or Michael raising questions about the level and type of post-disaster housing assistance being offered to affected households, particularly low-income households. I request that GAO study the use of DHAP in relation to other post-disaster housing assistance programs available to disaster survivors. I request that the study cover the following questions:

- 1) What types of temporary housing assistance has been offered to survivors of Hurricanes Harvey, Irma, Maria, Florence, and Michael? How many survivors have received assistance and at what cost?
- 2) What factors does FEMA consider when determining whether to activate DHAP? How, if at all, have these factors changed over time? Does FEMA consult with HUD in making its determination?
- 3) How have the terms of interagency agreements between FEMA and HUD changed over time? What process has FEMA used to oversee HUD and PHA implementation of DHAP?

- 4) How has DHAP differed from FEMA's other temporary housing assistance programs, such as Transitional Sheltering Assistance, Direct Lease, and Multi-Family Lease and Repair? To the extent data are available, what are some strengths and weaknesses of using DHAP compared to these other programs in terms of cost, timeliness of implementation, and survivor outcomes, such as transition to self-sufficiency?
- 5) Given the varying capacity of PHAs to assist disaster survivors in securing rental housing, to what extent has HUD taken steps to assist or provide PHAs with technical assistance that may be needed to implement DHAP?

If you have any questions, please contact Joel Walsh on my staff at 202-224-2627 or [Joel\\_Walsh@hsgac.senate.gov](mailto:Joel_Walsh@hsgac.senate.gov). Please send any official correspondence related to this request to [Rina\\_Patel@hsgac.senate.gov](mailto:Rina_Patel@hsgac.senate.gov). Thank you for your assistance with this matter.

Sincerely,



Claire McCaskill  
Ranking Member

cc: Ron Johnson  
Chairman