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The Most Honorable Senator Edward Markey
255 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington DC 20510

Dear Senator Markey:

Like millions of others around the country and around the world, the Town of Amherst Select Board has viewed with pain and sadness the reports on the devastation that Hurricane Maria has wrought in the lives and landscape of our fellow American citizens in the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico (Estado Libre Asociado de Puerto Rico) and the U.S. Virgin Islands.

Even as we and neighboring communities mobilize to welcome and provide services for the families and school children from Puerto Rico who will be relocating to western Massachusetts, we note with growing concern—indeed, dismay—that aid to the island and neighboring U.S. possessions is proceeding far more slowly than we have come to expect in similar circumstances. Nearly four weeks after Maria made landfall, 85 percent of the Puerto Rican population are still without power and 36 percent without safe drinking water. The task of rebuilding will be lengthy and immense in cost. Even as Governor Rosselló calls restoration of electricity to almost 95 percent of the island by mid-December an "aggressive" goal, the U.S. administration appears not to view the situation with the urgency it deserves. Indeed, after only reluctantly and belatedly waiving the Jones Act for ten days, it has now allowed that waiver to expire: this, despite the Governor's call to extend it and Senator McCain's call for a permanent exemption.

As other humanitarian tragedies and new political crises drive coverage of the hurricane's consequences from the headlines, it is all the more important that we keep the situation in the Caribbean in the focus of our attention. Knowing your commitment to justice and equal treatment for all Americans, we urge and implore you to use your legislative power and good offices to ensure that the maximum emergency aid can be delivered with all due dispatch and that subsequent recovery efforts be pursued energetically and with unceasing commitment.

Respectfully,

Douglas W. Slaughter, Chair