

A PREPARED COMMUNITY IS A RESILIENT COMMUNITY

FIELD HEARING

BEFORE THE

SUBCOMMITTEE ON EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS, RESPONSE, AND COMMUNICATIONS

OF THE

COMMITTEE ON HOMELAND SECURITY

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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A PREPARED COMMUNITY IS A RESILIENT COMMUNITY

Monday, July 11, 2016

U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
SUBCOMMITTEE ON EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS,
RESPONSE, AND COMMUNICATIONS,
COMMITTEE ON HOMELAND SECURITY,
Jersey City, NJ.

The subcommittee met, pursuant to notice, at 9:30 a.m., in the Staten Island University Hospital Regina McGinn Educational Center, 475 Seaview Avenue, Staten Island, New York, Hon. Daniel M. Donovan, Jr. (Chairman of the subcommittee) presiding.

Present: Representatives Donovan and Payne.

Mr. DONOVAN. Thank you, ladies and gentlemen, for attending today. I just wanted to warn that at 10 o'clock the hospital has some type of drill that is going to go on, so you are going to hear alarms. It has nothing to do with the hearing, and it doesn't mean it is over, to our witnesses. Thank you.

The Committee on Homeland Security's Subcommittee on Emergency Preparedness, Response, and Communications will come to order.

The subcommittee is meeting today to examine efforts to ensure community resilience. I appreciate the effort taken on behalf of all those involved to have this important field hearing take place. This is an official Congressional hearing, as opposed to a town hall meeting and, as such, we must abide by certain rules of the Committee on Homeland Security and the House of Representatives. I kindly wish to remind our guests today that demonstrations from the audience, including applause and verbal outbursts, as well as any use of signs or placards, are a violation of the rules of the House of Representatives. It is important that we respect the decorum and the rules of this committee.

I now recognize myself for an opening statement.

Thank you all for taking the time to appear today before the Subcommittee on Emergency Preparedness, Response, and Communications, and I thank Staten Island University Hospital for hosting us in this beautiful facility.

Nearly 4 years ago, a perfect confluence of circumstances brought Superstorm Sandy and its devastating storm surge to our doorstep. Dozens of New Yorkers lost their lives, thousands of homes were damaged or destroyed, and billions of dollars have been spent in the aftermath.

Oftentimes after a disaster like this, the public just wants to see action—something, anything—being done to fix it. Under the gun,

Congress drafts legislation to allocate massive sums to Federal agencies and to impacted jurisdictions, usually with limited oversight.

Resources are, of course, necessary to recover and defend against future disasters. But have the investments made after Superstorm Sandy resulted in a stronger, more resilient New York? Just as importantly, have the Federal agencies worked together to maximize their individual investments? What can be done to improve?

That is what we are here to talk about today. My opening statement will discuss the rationale for Federal investments in storm resiliency projects and then highlight a few examples of Government working well, and also areas for improvement. I look forward to hearing from each agency, delving into some more specifics about their resiliency focus and how we can improve upon the status quo.

First, it is a fact that \$1 spent today to mitigate flood risk will save many dollars after a disaster strikes. The Federal Government's focus on risk mitigation, particularly the concentrated focus after Sandy, will save lives and money in the future. It is a missed opportunity to replace in-kind homes and infrastructure after a disaster, only to leave them just as vulnerable to destruction during future disasters. That is why it is encouraging to see agencies like HUD place such a strong emphasis on resiliency projects.

But the investments should have a cohesive strategy. Not just HUD investments working together with other HUD investments, or Army Corps projects tying into other Army Corps projects. Where possible, HUD projects should complement FEMA projects, and USDA projects should complement Army Corps projects, and so on.

For example, it seems strange that differing FEMA and Army Corps standards would result in no change in flood insurance maps or premiums after the Army Corps completes a project designed to reduce flood risk. Yet, that has actually happened in some cases.

The response has not just been Federal. The city of New York has also devoted tremendous resources to Sandy recovery and has transformed the way it approaches disaster preparedness and recovery over the last 4 years.

Here at home, the city of New York has acted aggressively to advocate for Federal risk mitigation grants, coordinate investments and projects, and work toward a city less susceptible to storms like Sandy.

The Mayor's Office of Recovery and Resiliency, led by Dan Zarrilli, has an entire team dedicated to this cause. In general, an empowered office coordinating the different work happening in the city will minimize missed opportunities, save time, and maximize efficiencies. It's good to see that New York City is operating in this way.

We can find a great example of the benefits of collaboration right here on Staten Island. The Army Corps of Engineers is planning and designing a \$600 million line of protection stretching from Ft. Wadsworth to Oakwood along Staten Island's eastern shore.

There have been obstacles and setbacks, but through each challenge the Mayor's Office, the Corps, and the National Park Service, which has jurisdiction over some of the land that the Corps is

using, have worked collaboratively and productively to overcome them.

My team, along with Senator Chuck Schumer's office and Borough President James Oddo's office, is on the phone almost every week with the involved agencies to keep track of its progress and schedules.

While the Corps is not here today, this subcommittee will continue to maintain focus on the status of that project to ensure that it remains on time, on budget, and that it will deliver the expected results to the residents of Staten Island.

Despite great partnerships, agency turf battles seem to be unavoidable, and that's disappointing. The Corps and the USDA have been squabbling over easements, which has jeopardized a \$32 million investment in Staten Island's "Bluebelt," a natural drainage system crucial to the borough's sustainability. Oddly, each agency wants the same exact outcome, a flood drainage easement. I understand differences of opinion will arise across agencies, but collaboration must trump retrenchment. It is what the public expects and, more importantly, what they deserve.

We must also address the post-disaster housing recovery strategies to effectively mitigate risk. After spending upwards of \$4.6 billion, New York City neighborhoods will be left with a hodgepodge of housing types. A single block could see a handful of elevated and rebuilt structures, a few empty lots, and the rest repaired in-kind. Is this the best possible outcome?

We must consider the question in the context of New York City's unique housing stock. Mitigation standards that work for single-family detached homes in the south don't work for multi-family attached structures here.

In fact, Federal one-size-fits-all floodplain building regulations actually prohibit repairing attached homes that suffered the most damage. Floodplain regulations require homes that suffered substantial damage to elevate during repairs, but attached homes can't be elevated. Owners of attached homes are stuck in this bureaucratic morass, unable to legally repair their structures and unsure of options aside from elevation that could reduce their flood risk. Urban areas like New York require detailed alternative mitigation options with commensurate flood insurance premium credits.

While inflexible Federal standards may impede urban post-disaster housing mitigation, New York City has benefited from creative new ventures like FEMA's 428 alternative process and HUD's resiliency competitions. I'm sure we will hear more about the successes of these programs from the agencies here today. In particular, I am interested in hearing FEMA's assessment of the Rapid Repairs program, which restored heat, hot water, and electricity to 20,000 residential structures in 90 days.

Last but not least, we will hear from representatives of charitable organizations and Southside Hospital. These organizations worked tirelessly to assist the residents in their communities after the storm, and each of them experienced their own challenges in these efforts.

Non-profits are often the most effective responders because they have deep local relationships and understand the needs of their friends and neighbors. My friend Vinny Ignizio, who leads Catholic

Charities here on Staten Island today but was a council member during and after Sandy, has a unique perspective on how government and non-profits can improve their coordination in response to disasters. I am sure Ms. Higgs will also have a unique perspective on this issue.

Hospitals are among the most important critical infrastructure during and after a major disaster. SIUH, where we are here today, is in the 100-year floodplain, as is Southside, which faced tremendous flooding during Sandy.

Three Federal agencies—FEMA, HUD, and the VA—have made substantial resiliency investments in New York hospitals, and I am interested in hearing how the agencies have coordinated their investments to make them work together to maximize their utility. In particular, I am also interested in hearing from Southside Hospital in regard to their experiences working with FEMA since the storm.

As the subcommittee meets today, we are at the start of another hurricane season, and whether it is this year or in the years to come, another disaster will strike New York City. Four years after Sandy and the appropriation of more than \$50 billion for the regional recovery effort, are we more prepared today than we were before?

This hearing will point us in the right direction. Now is the time to address any inadequate statutes, resolve any interagency turf battles, and build the relationships to ensure that we are a resilient community in the face of the next disaster.

Before I yield to my friend, the Ranking Member from New Jersey, Don Payne, for his opening statement, I want you all to know that when I was appointed the chairman of this subcommittee, I said that we wouldn't be holding hearings just for the sake of holding hearings. After each hearing that we have held this year since I became Chair, we have taken action on the information provided by our witnesses, whether it was successfully advocating for the restoration of homeland security grants that are vital to New York City and major urban areas around the country or introducing legislation to address cybersecurity challenges.

Today's hearing will be no different. Many of the issues I will raise today have been raised by my constituents, and I can assure you that we will work to consider and take action on the things we learn from today's hearing.

With that, I welcome our distinguished witnesses and yield back the balance of my time.

[The statement of Chairman Donovan follows:]

STATEMENT OF CHAIRMAN DANIEL M. DONOVAN, JR.

JULY 11, 2016

Thank you all for taking the time to appear today before the Subcommittee on Emergency Preparedness, Response, and Communications, and thank you to Staten Island University Hospital for hosting us in this beautiful facility.

Nearly 4 years ago, a perfect confluence of circumstances brought Superstorm Sandy and its devastating storm surge to our doorstep. Dozens of New Yorkers lost their lives, thousands of homes were damaged or destroyed, and billions of dollars have been spent in the aftermath.

Often times after a disaster like this, the public just wants to see action—something, anything—being done to Fix It. Under the gun, Congress drafts legislation

to allocate massive sums to Federal agencies and to impacted jurisdictions, usually with limited oversight.

Resources are, of course necessary, to recover and defend against future disasters. But have the investments made after Superstorm Sandy resulted in a stronger, more resilient New York? And just as importantly, have the Federal agencies worked together to maximize their individual investments? What can we improve?

That's what we're here to talk about today. My opening statement will discuss the rationale for Federal investments in storm resiliency projects, and then highlight a few examples of Government working well and areas for improvement. I look forward to hearing each agency delve into some more specifics about their resiliency focus, and how we can improve upon the status quo.

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To ensure that it remains on time, on budget, and that it will deliver the expected results to the residents of Staten Island.

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Before I yield to the Ranking Member for his opening statement, I want you all to know that when I was appointed Chairman of this subcommittee, I said that we wouldn't be holding hearings just for the sake of holding hearings. After each hearing we've held this year, we've taken action on the information provided by our witnesses—whether it was successfully advocating for the restoration of homeland security grants that are vital to New York City and major urban areas around the country or introducing legislation to address cybersecurity challenges.

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With that, I welcome our distinguished witnesses and yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. DONOVAN. The Chair now recognizes the Ranking Member of the subcommittee, Mr. Payne, for an opening statement.

Mr. PAYNE. Thank you. Good morning. I am pleased to join my good friend, Chairman Donovan, today in Staten Island to learn how the New York-New Jersey region has built itself better and stronger in the nearly 4 years following Superstorm Sandy.

But before I begin, I want to acknowledge the circumstances we find ourselves in today. Last week, National tragedies filled the headlines. My heart is heavy for the families of those who were killed in Baton Rouge, Falcon Heights, and Dallas. Although these tragedies happened far away from here, our communities are not immune from this kind of heartbreak. I hope that when we return to Washington this week, with only 5 legislative days remaining

before a 7-week recess, the House will do something meaningful about law enforcement's relationship with diverse communities. I hope it will do something about the irrational access to military-style firearms that killed 5 brave police officers Thursday night, which has always been my concern of these weapons being available.

Our country can do better than this.

Turning the focus to today's field hearing, nearly 4 years ago Superstorm Sandy pummeled this region, destroying homes and communities and causing tens of billions of dollars in damage. Our region is not accustomed to responding to and recovering from storms of this magnitude, and our population density, coupled with significant infrastructure damage, certainly complicated the process.

I am proud of the hard work and compassion demonstrated by our local emergency responders in the days and weeks following the storm. I wish I could say the same for the government of my home State of New Jersey. In the years that followed the disaster, allegations surfaced that the Governor has played politics with disaster relief money, and to this day people complain that the State has been slow to distribute funds to those who need it.

As of April, approximately \$1 billion in Federal funds has yet to be obligated. In the wake of the storm, people in low-income communities were hit hardest and ultimately struggled most to find affordable housing in the months that followed. These recovery challenges were exacerbated by the fact that many in low-income populations were not in a position to advocate for themselves to access the resources necessary to recover and become more resilient.

Today we are in the midst of hurricane season, and I am wondering what would be different if a storm like Sandy hit us today. Does the Federal Government have better measures in place to ensure that State governments administer programs supported by Federal dollars quickly and efficiently and not play politics with disaster relief? Are low-income communities as able to incorporate hazard mitigation and resilience activities into the disaster recovery efforts as more affluent communities are? If not, what are we doing about it?

Finally, what have we learned about how to best leverage the capabilities of charities and non-profit organizations in disaster response?

I look forward to the witnesses' testimony today and thoughts on what Congress can do to help make communities more resilient.

With that, Mr. Chairman, I yield back the balance of my time.
[The statement of Ranking Member Payne follows:]

STATEMENT OF RANKING MEMBER DONALD M. PAYNE, JR.

JULY 11, 2016

Last week, National tragedies filled the headlines. My heart is heavy for the families of those who were killed in Baton Rouge, Falcon Heights, and Dallas. Although these tragedies happened far away from here, our communities are not immune to this kind of heartbreak.

I hope that when we return to Washington this week—with only 5 legislative days remaining before a 7-week recess—the House will do something meaningful about law enforcement relationships with diverse communities. I also hope it will do some-

thing about the irrational access to military-style firearms that killed 5 brave police officers Thursday night. Our country can be better than this.

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Today, we are in the midst of hurricane season, and I am wondering what would be different if a storm like Sandy hit us. Does the Federal Government have better measures in place to ensure that State governments administer Federal programs supported quickly and effectively—and do not play politics with disaster relief?

Are low-income communities able to incorporate hazard mitigation and resilience activities into their disaster recovery efforts as more affluent communities? And if not, what are we doing about it? Finally, what have we learned about how to best leverage the capabilities of charities and non-profit organizations in disaster response?

I look forward to the witnesses' testimony today and thoughts on what Congress can do to help make communities more resilient.

Mr. DONOVAN. The gentleman yields back.

We are pleased to have two panels of very distinguished witnesses before us today on this important topic. I will now introduce our first panel.

Mr. Michael Byrne serves as deputy regional administrator for Federal Emergency Management Agency Region II. Prior to joining FEMA, he spent 20 years with the New York City Fire Department and served as first deputy director of the New York City Office of Emergency Management. Mr. Byrne also served as FEMA's regional operations chief after the 9/11 attack on the World Trade Center. Following Hurricane Sandy, Mr. Byrne served as the Federal coordinating officer for New York.

Ms. Marion McFadden serves as deputy assistant secretary for grant programs in the Office of Community Planning and Development, CPD, at the Department of Housing and Urban Development. Prior to joining CPD in August 2014, Ms. McFadden served as chief operating officer and acting executive director for the Hurricane Sandy Rebuilding Task Force and was a founder of the Rebuild By Design competition.

Mr. Dan Zarrilli serves as New York City's chief resilience officer, overseeing the Mayor's Office of Recovery and Resiliency, Office of Sustainability, and the city's OneNYC Program, a position he has held since January 2016. Prior to this, he was the first director of the Mayor's Office of Recovery and Resiliency in March 2014 and served as the acting director of the Office of Long-Term Planning and Sustainability from February to December 2014. After Hurricane Sandy, he served on the Special Initiative for Rebuilding Resiliency.

The witnesses' full written statements will appear in the record. Before I recognize Administrator Byrne for testimony, I ask unani-

mous consent to enter into the record written testimony submitted by the elected officials from Staten Island and Brooklyn. Without objection, this is so ordered.

[The information follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF RONALD CASTORINA, JR., ASSEMBLYMAN, 62ND DISTRICT,
THE ASSEMBLY, ALBANY, STATE OF NEW YORK

JULY 11, 2016

Thank you, Congressman Donovan, for soliciting my input concerning the future use of Federal funds to aid Staten Island in the event of another catastrophic storm like Hurricane Sandy ("Sandy"). While Sandy may be a distant memory to many citizens in the area, to Staten Islanders, and my constituents on its South Shore it never abated and remains an on-going problem. The effects from Sandy manifest themselves from zombie properties to small businesses that were forced to shutter their doors due to inadequate coordination among the different branches of government. It is clear that citizens, and local businesses cannot afford a repeat of failings of Sandy.

I, however, submit this testimony with the benefit of hindsight. It will neither serve my constituents nor will it aid in the process to continue living in the past. Today, I implore this esteemed committee to assure my constituents, and all Staten Islanders that we will not be forgotten to the bright lights and titans of finance in Manhattan, or the boardwalks of New Jersey.

Sandy taught us that a hurricane's storm surge is every bit as deadly as its winds and rains. Staten Island requires the allocation of substantial Federal funds to secure its coastline against the ravages of future storm surges. Twenty-four Staten Islanders died as a result of Sandy's rising tides accounting for more than half the deaths in New York City. We need to remember it was Sandy's storm surge that ripped little Connor and Brendan Moore¹ from their mother's arms and dragged their lifeless bodies to a marsh at the dead end of McLaughlin Street in South Beach. While I am happy to see the Federal Government plans to protect the residents and businesses of Lower Manhattan, residents and businesses on Staten Island are entitled to the same protections as the stock exchange.



¹ Photo of Connor and Brendan Moore appearing on *silive.com* 10/29/2013.

Staten Island requires a total overall of its flood drainage system, the construction of sea walls and temporary flood walls that could be deployed before a storm, and the building grass berms that could double as recreational areas. Essentially, Staten Island requires, and deserves, all of the protections touted by Senator Schumer to be afforded to the residents and businesses in Lower Manhattan.²

I am fully cognizant of the importance Lower Manhattan plays in the economy of this country and, undeniably, the entire world. Before we, as a Nation, commit to restoring recreational areas and centers of commerce, I believe we must ensure that people are safe in their homes. To do otherwise reinforces a culture of fungible workers and consumers. I ask the esteemed Members of this committee to remember the faces of these 2 children when allocating Federal funds and implore you not to send a message that the protection of commerce alone trumps the freedom from fear in their homes.

PREPARED STATEMENT OF NICOLE MALLIOTAKIS, ASSEMBLYWOMAN, 64TH DISTRICT,
THE ASSEMBLY, ALBANY, STATE OF NEW YORK

JULY 11, 2016

First, allow me to express my enthusiasm and gratitude that a real, robust coastal storm risk management project is being implemented in Staten Island. After decades of fear and waiting, the people of these shoreline communities will finally receive the protection they need and deserve. It is unfortunate that it took a catastrophe like Hurricane Sandy to move this project forward, but I am sure that all residents, elected officials, and government agencies are eager to see this plan finalized and commence with construction.

COMMUNICATION AND TIMELINESS ARE KEY.

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) and New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (NYSDEC) presently enjoy overwhelming support from the community on the East Shore seawall project. However, adequate communication with the residents and their elected officials, along with a strict adherence to timetables, are vital to maintaining this positive relationship. Most of the community understands that a project of this magnitude will encounter unforeseeable problems, but that level of understanding will go only so far as what is timely and honestly communicated to them.

LOWERING FLOOD INSURANCE PREMIUMS MUST BE A PRIORITY GOAL.

As you are likely aware, the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) is in the process of developing updated flood maps for New York City that will draw an increased amount of properties into the Federally-designated floodplain and, accordingly, will require an increased number of homeowners to purchase flood insurance policies. Furthermore, those who already own flood insurance policies will see their premiums increase. These changes approach steadily, and surely, and promise a profound impact on a significant number of Staten Islanders, many of whom are still struggling to recover from the destruction wrought by Sandy. I implore that you work with FEMA to ensure that the completion of this project is considered in the calculation of flood insurance premiums and furthermore, meets FEMA's requirements so homeowners indeed benefit from lower premiums.

THIS PROJECT MUST BE SCALABLE AND FLEXIBLE.

I was very pleased to learn that seawall project is being developed with an eye toward the future and the ability to alter the physical barriers for increased protection. This project is an investment in Staten Island, and must come with the ability to properly conform to changing weather patterns and future needs of our community.

PHASE II OF THE SEAWALL PROJECT.

The southern portion of my legislative district extends into the neighborhoods of Great Kills and Eltingville, home to many residents who shouldered the same devastation of their neighbors to the northeast but beyond the reach of Phase I of the seawall project.

² http://www.nytimes.com/2016/01/19/nyregion/new-york-city-to-get-176-million-from-us-for-storm-protections.html?_r=0 (accessed 7/12/2016).

You are likely familiar with the beach mitigation program implemented by the New York City Department of Parks & Recreation, with guidance from the USACE, to provide temporary shoreline protection for the communities most heavily impacted by Sandy. The project was expeditiously completed and has been well-received by nearby residents, with one particularly glaring exception. The shoreline terminus of Goodall Street lacks public property upon which any natural protective measure can be implemented, resulting in a gap in the berm as it runs from the southern end of Great Kills Harbor along the South Shore.

Many residents on Goodall Street and surrounding blocks now feel as if they reside in a “bullseye” for the next storm, and upon completion of Phase I those feelings will only be exacerbated. As we move toward finalization of Phase I, I respectfully urge you to begin working on Phase 2 to protect the remainder of Staten Island while, as mentioned above, properly communicating with those residents.

LOST AMENITIES MUST BE REPLACED.

The shoreline property along Father Capodanno Boulevard has been a recreational destination for more than a century and, sadly, the many ballfields, picnic grounds, bocce courts, playgrounds, and even a skate park, will also be displaced by this new construction. Additionally, we have a successful small business that operates The Vanderbilt, South Fin Grill, and a Ben & Jerry's concession that need to be preserved. I respectfully urge Federal Government to work with the city of New York, its agencies, and the owners of the aforementioned small businesses to ensure that the community retains its ability to enjoy these amenities.

Thank you again for your diligence on what is an issue of incredible importance in Staten Island's history. I look forward to working with you and will avail my office to any needs that you encounter.

Mr. DONOVAN. The Chair now recognizes Deputy Regional Administrator Byrne for 5 minutes.

STATEMENT OF MICHAEL BYRNE, DEPUTY REGIONAL ADMINISTRATOR, FEDERAL EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AGENCY, REGION II, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY

Mr. BYRNE. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Good morning, Chairman Donovan and Members of the subcommittee. My name is Michael Byrne. I am the deputy regional administrator, and I am proud to be back here in New York as the Region II administrator, after serving as the Federal coordinating officer before in my time at the New York City Fire Department.

I would like to take this opportunity to share some best practices and lessons we learned from Sandy, and I will also address some changes made by Congress that we have integrated into those to promote resiliency and to expedite recovery from a disaster.

Thanks to new authorities given to us by Congress through the 2013 Sandy Recovery Improvement Act, or SRIA, we are now armed with more flexibility to implement our programs and to deliver Federal assistance; for example, in our Public Assistance Program, which provides funds to States and local governments and to eligible non-profits to cover debris removal, emergency work, and permanent repairs. To date, we have obligated over \$14.5 billion in public assistance funding to New York and New Jersey. Thanks to the flexibility provided in SRIA and FEMA's internal commitment to make sure we emphasize resiliency, we have seen a significant increase in the project funding dedicated to mitigation. After Sandy, for every dollar that we spent to repair and restore, we spent an additional 34 to 85 cents to incorporate mitigation into these projects to improve resiliency, not just to build it back the way it was but to build it back stronger. This is a significant increase from past practices.

In one example, the New York City Health and Hospitals Corporation received more than \$1.7 billion for permanent repairs in critical building systems at Bellevue, Coler, Coney Island, and Metropolitan Hospitals. Metropolitan strikes a chord with me because that is where, when I was a kid growing up, that is where they took me to get patched up after various and sundry accidents. In this case, the Hospital Corporation received \$755 million of the total for hazard mitigation. That is more than one-third of the total funding that went to building back stronger and better. This additional resilience will reduce the impact of future storms on these facilities that serve more than 1 million people every year.

Another disaster program, the Hazard Mitigation Grant Program, or HMGP, which is one of our core programs, has spent nearly \$1 billion it obligated in New York and New Jersey. This includes \$45 million for this very hospital we are in today, the Staten Island University Hospital campus. Its funding, in coordination with funding from HUD, will elevate the utility systems in the main building to mitigate against future floods.

Thanks to SRIA, we are also implementing advanced assistance funding. These funds allow us to give out funds on the front end to develop smarter mitigation plans and obtain data to prioritize and develop projects for the remaining funds to be used even more appropriately.

In our other program area, the Individual Assistance Program, which is direct funding to families that are impacted, we provided over \$1.4 billion in assistance to nearly 180,000 individuals and households after Sandy. We worked closely with the city and State partners to set up mobile teams that went door-to-door to make sure survivors were reached and taken care of. I am proud to say it was FDNY's management team that led the effort and coordinated it, and we were proud to be a part of it. This approach has been codified in the way FEMA does business now to better protect survivors.

In April 2013, FEMA created the Disaster Survivor Assistance Program, and these DSA teams have the training and the technology not just to wait for the call but to go out to the communities, to register, do case updates, and refer clients to other support.

One of the biggest challenges in recovery is coordinating across State, Federal, and local government to make sure that we maximize the impact. In Sandy we established the New York-New Jersey Federal Leadership Collaborative which provides an unparalleled format for Federal partners to conduct comprehensive, region-wide planning and identify opportunities to leverage dollars. This type of enhanced Federal recovery coordination continues to be implemented post-Sandy.

We have also seen as an example increased collaboration amongst the departments and agencies for unified Federal review. We are required to do environmental and historic preservation reviews whenever we are using Federal funds, and 11 departments and agencies have signed a Memorandum of Understanding to share that information so that each of our departments can work in a more streamlined way and reduce the review and duplication of effort.

Sandy was one of the largest, most complex disasters we have responded to in the past decade. With the associated challenges came the opportunity to develop innovations and efficiencies, and we will continue to work with Congress and other partners to build more resilient communities before and after disaster.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify. I look forward to your questions.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Byrne follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF MICHAEL BYRNE

JULY 11, 2016

INTRODUCTION

Good morning Chairman Donovan and Members of the subcommittee. My name is Michael Byrne and I am the deputy regional administrator for FEMA Region II. I was also the Federal coordinating officer in New York during the Hurricane Sandy response. Thank you for the opportunity to discuss lessons learned from Hurricane Sandy, and how best practices have since been applied to promote resiliency and expedite the disaster recovery process.

On October 29, 2012, Hurricane Sandy made landfall along the East Coast with impacts felt across more than a dozen States. The storm battered the densely-populated New York and New Jersey coasts, with heavy rain, strong winds, and record storm surges. In Sandy's immediate aftermath, more than 23,000 people sought refuge in temporary shelters, and more than 8.5 million customers lost power. The storm flooded numerous roads and tunnels, blocked transportation corridors and paralyzed the transit network in the Northeast, and deposited extensive debris along the coastline.

The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) coordinated the Federal Government's immediate response and provided support for the critical emergency needs of affected States. Before landfall, we staged food, water, and equipment in the northeast. National Incident Management Assistance Teams were deployed to New York and New Jersey pre-landfall to work side-by-side with our local counterparts and address their needs. Within 48 hours of landfall, FEMA had more than 1,200 people in the field going door-to-door in affected neighborhoods.

Our efforts did not stop after the initial response phase. Today, FEMA Region II continues to coordinate the on-going recovery activities in New York and New Jersey. Our focus is to not only build back communities and the infrastructure serving them, but to help build them back better so they are more resilient before the next event.

The magnitude of Sandy and its impacts reinforces the need to be creative and innovative in the way we respond to and recover from disasters to ensure we can be agile and get assistance to survivors and our State and local partners as soon as possible.

On January 29, 2013, President Obama signed the Sandy Recovery Improvement Act (SRIA) of 2013. Thanks to new authorities given to us by Congress through SRIA, we are now able to deliver federal assistance to survivors in new and improved ways. Some of these changes were piloted for the first time throughout the Sandy recovery process.

In this testimony, I will highlight some best practices and lessons learned during Sandy and how we have integrated those, as well as changes directed by SRIA, to promote resilience and expedite recovery.

DELIVERY OF FEMA RECOVERY PROGRAMS

Public Assistance Program

As of June 2016, FEMA has obligated more than \$14.5 billion in Federal funding through the Public Assistance (PA) program to cover debris removal, emergency work, and permanent work in both New York and New Jersey. Of this amount, nearly \$3 billion is dedicated to adding mitigation measures to rebuilding projects to protect against future damage, as authorized under Section 406 of the Stafford Act.

The PA program traditionally reimburses applicants for the actual costs of completed projects. New legislative authorities granted to FEMA in SRIA now allow applicants to request and obtain funding based on certified cost estimates to repair, restore, or replace a damaged facility. Once FEMA and the applicant agree on the

damage assessment, scope of work, and estimated costs, the PA grant obligation is determined. The goals of these Public Assistance Alternative Procedures (PAAP) are to reduce costs to the Federal Government; increase flexibility in the administration of assistance; expedite the assistance so funding can be obligated prior to a project's start; and provide financial incentives for the timely and cost-effective completion of projects.

The use of these alternative procedures is optional for States and Tribes but allows them to retain funding when there are cost underruns and utilize these funds for additional hazard mitigation measures and for activities that improve future PA program permanent work operations, such as training and planning for disaster recovery operations.

Alternative procedures were used for more than 60 percent of PA project funding for New York (New Jersey elected not to use PAAP). Seventy-eight PAAP projects in NYC and Long Island to support repair and restoration were approved and funded, totaling \$9.9 billion. This includes 33 projects for the New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA) which supports approximately \$2.9 billion of work at more than 33 campuses with 250 buildings. These PAAP projects also include a significant amount of mitigation. For every dollar spent on repair and restoration efforts, an additional \$.85 has been spent on mitigation measures incorporated into the projects to help disaster-damaged buildings be more resilient to withstand potential future disasters. This number is nearly double the \$.44 for non-PAAP permanent work grants.

In one project, New York Health and Hospitals Corporation (HHC)—representing the largest public hospital system in the country—received more than \$1.7 billion for permanent repairs of critical building systems at Bellevue, Metropolitan, Coler, and Coney Island hospitals. Thanks to the flexibility of the alternative procedures, the applicant was able to receive \$755 million of the total project funding for hazard mitigation measures. These measures include constructing flood walls to protect the campus from flood inundation; elevating critical components of the mechanical, electrical, piping and fire systems; and installing additional pumping stations and enhanced storm water management measures. This additional resilience will reduce the impact of heavy rain, strong winds, and storm surge on these hospital facilities that are critical to the more than 1 million people who are served every year by this health care system.

New York University (NYU) Langone Medical Center also received \$1.13 billion under the PAAP program. Approximately \$540 million was allocated for permanent repairs and restoration to damage throughout NYU's campus and \$590 million for hazard mitigation against future storms, which includes installing exterior flood doors/barriers and additional sump pumps, and elevating the mechanical, electrical, and piping systems. This assistance has not only helped the hospital recover, but the increased resilience will help prevent the type of damage and power outage that forced the hospital to evacuate nearly 300 patients including 45 critical care patients and 20 infants.

FEMA recently completed a SRIA PAAP pilot program evaluation to capture best practices, lessons learned, and areas for improvement. The evaluation focused heavily on permanent work projects in New York. Initial conclusions show that alternative procedures allowed for flexibility and an opportunity to “build back better” by increasing the amount of hazard mitigation associated with projects. The evaluation also captured some areas for improvement, which FEMA is in the process of addressing for future disasters, including:

- The need for clear and consistent guidance and tools to effectively communicate the program.
- Further streamlining processes associated with PAAP projects, where possible, to lessen administrative burden.

Since Sandy, FEMA has made additional significant changes to the PA program to more efficiently support our State, local, Tribal, and territorial (SLTT) partners through the disaster recovery process. These changes include the development and testing of a new PA program delivery model which reorganizes how we review and validate project requests to expedite funding to our partners for smaller, less-complex projects. The new delivery model also allows PA field management to determine the number of customer-facing program delivery managers needed based on the size and complexity of the disaster. PA staff will be assigned specialized tasks, will be given manageable workloads, and will input all project notes into a customer relations management system to ensure consistency of delivery and smooth transition in the event of staff turnover.

The new process was recently implemented for the first time in response to the flooding and mudslides in Oregon, and we are incorporating lessons learned into continued implementation of the new delivery model. FEMA is currently under-

taking a significant training effort to ensure all of our staff are trained on the new model before we begin to scale implementation Nationally.

We also completed the new PA Program and Policy Guide which consolidated information from 5 publications and 63 policies to clarify processes and provide simplified direction to SLTT partners on how to use the program.

Hazard Mitigation Grant Program

Following a Presidentially-declared disaster, the Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP) provides Federal funding to SLTT governments to implement long-term hazard mitigation measures. The HMGP was created to reduce the loss of life and property due to natural disasters, and enables mitigation measures to be implemented during the immediate recovery from a disaster. Unlike Stafford Act Section 406 mitigation funding, HMGP projects do not need to be related to infrastructure damaged by the Presidentially-declared disaster.

Under the HMGP program for Hurricane Sandy, nearly \$1 billion in funding has been obligated in New York and New Jersey for mitigation projects prioritized by the States. This includes an HMGP grant to the New York State Department of Transportation (NYSDOT) to fund mitigation measures for the State's most vulnerable bridges. NYSDOT conducted a risk assessment and determined 106 bridges required repairs and upgrades to mitigate against flooding and scouring (erosion due to water). To date, more than \$490 million has been obligated for repairs and mitigation measures for these bridges.

SRIA directs FEMA to streamline HMGP activities and adopt measures that will expedite the implementation of the program. Streamlining actions include identifying: Minimum criteria for complete applications; time frames for reviewing actions and decisions; phasing of projects; industry cost guides for estimates; industry design and construction standards; and pre-calculated benefits. SRIA also authorizes the use of Advance Assistance, allowing FEMA to provide up to 25 percent of the HMGP ceiling to applicants in advance of incurring eligible costs, in order to accelerate the implementation of the HMGP. Advance Assistance can be used to support a more strategic approach to a State's mitigation efforts, this includes developing mitigation plans and obtaining data to prioritize, select, and develop applications in a timely manner.

FEMA published updated Hazard Mitigation Assistance (HMA) Guidance in 2015 to provide comprehensive information about the 3 HMA programs: HMGP, the Pre-Disaster Mitigation (PDM) program, and the Flood Mitigation Assistance (FMA) program. The Guidance includes information about streamlined program delivery, the expedited methodology for benefit-cost ratios for residential hurricane wind retrofit projects, and 23 job aids and resources to assist internal and external partners with implementing the programs.

Unified Federal Environmental and Historic Preservation Review

Prior to obligating Federal funding for a disaster recovery project, Federal resource and regulatory agencies provide permits, Federal determinations, and/or special knowledge and expertise to inform the development of the project and ensure that environmental and historic preservation (EHP) requirements under their jurisdiction are met. All Federal agencies have a responsibility as stewards of the environment to help communities rebuild while effectively managing the use of natural, cultural, and historic resources.

To help streamline and coordinate these efforts, SRIA directs the President—in consultation with FEMA, the Council on Environmental Quality, and the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation—to establish a unified interagency review process to ensure compliance with EHP requirements under Federal law relating to disaster recovery projects, while expediting the review time line. Eleven departments and agencies executed an interagency memorandum of understanding (MOU) on July 29, 2014, committing to support the Unified Federal Environmental and Historic Preservation Review (UFR) process.

The UFR is a framework designed to enhance the ability of Federal agencies to expedite project environmental and historic preservation (EHP) reviews during disaster recovery by promoting:

- Consistency and coordination among multiple Federal agency EHP reviews;
- Collaboration and coordination among Federal, Tribal, State, and local agencies;
- Leveraged and efficient use of agency staff and funds;
- Quick resolution of coordination challenges;
- More informed Federal decision making; and
- Expedited execution and implementation of disaster recovery projects.

UFR Implementation During Hurricane Sandy Recovery

There were several situations during Hurricane Sandy recovery operations in which the UFR concept was successfully used to expedite the EHP review for Federally-funded projects. Roberto Clemente Park and the Rockaway Boardwalk received funding from both FEMA and the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). HUD completed an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for Roberto Clemente Park and an Environmental Assessment (EA) for Rockaway Boardwalk to satisfy the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) requirements for these projects. FEMA was able to leverage the work already completed by HUD. Using the information contained in HUD's EIS and EA, FEMA was able to more rapidly complete its EHP reviews. This reduced overall review time, expedited review requirements for two multi-million-dollar projects, and eliminated duplication of effort.

Today FEMA continues to implement the UFR process during review of long-term recovery projects associated with Hurricane Sandy. The New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA) has 33 campuses that are receiving both FEMA and HUD recovery grant funding. As part of the EHP review for projects associated with these NYCHA housing complexes, FEMA invited HUD and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to be cooperating agencies on the development of the required Environmental Assessments. Inter-agency collaboration at the beginning of this project's formulation and EHP review has allowed for engagement of multiple technical experts and resource agencies as part of a single, coordinated review. This has facilitated a more comprehensive decision-making process, and streamlined the review process for all of these Federal funding agencies and the NYCHA.

On-going UFR Efforts

To further institutionalize the UFR to provide streamlined, coordinated support to SLTT partners during future responses, FEMA and Federal interagency partners have furthered the development and implementation of the UFR process since the execution of the UFR MOU in 2014. We created new tools and mechanisms focused on improving and expediting Federal agencies' EHP reviews. Additional resources have been developed to better educate disaster applicants on the EHP requirements for Federally-funded disaster grants, while new coordination and data-sharing agreement documents help to promote and codify new collaborative approaches to EHP review during disaster recovery operations.

The creation of the new UFR Advisor position has also been a major accomplishment in providing support to field recovery operations following disasters. This position serves an advisor to the Federal Disaster Recovery Coordinator (FDRC) whenever they are activated. During FDRC-led inter-agency recovery operations, the UFR Advisor works to identify and implement opportunities to expedite the EHP review process for recovery projects following that disaster.

FEMA's UFR team, led by the National UFR Coordinator, continues their efforts to further educate Federal, State, Tribal, and local government partners on the UFR process. Full implementation of UFR is scheduled for the end of calendar year 2017.

Individual Assistance Program

Through FEMA's Individual and Households Program, we provided more than \$1.4 billion in assistance to nearly 180,000 individuals and households in New York and New Jersey after Hurricane Sandy. The majority of this funding was dedicated for housing assistance (\$1.2 billion), including costs for temporary housing needs and repair or replacement of residences.

During the response, FEMA, along with Federal and State partners, set up fixed and mobile Disaster Recovery Centers where survivors could register for assistance and get their questions answered. We also had Community Relations staff working in affected communities assisting survivors and providing situational awareness back to disaster operations leadership.

In April 2013, following lessons learned from Hurricane Sandy and in an effort to focus on a survivor-centric approach to providing disaster assistance, FEMA transformed the Community Relations function and developed the new Disaster Survivor Assistance (DSA) Program.

DSA teams provide on-site registration, case status updates, and on-the-spot needs assessments including referrals to other Federal agencies and whole community partners. They address immediate and emerging needs by meeting survivors at their homes or in their communities, and use portable technology to maintain mobile operations. Teams use a GIS-based application to report and capture data that is instantly replicated to the FEMA GeoPlatform, ensuring that real-time information is available to support operations.

DSA teams are a professional “force multiplier” that support SLTT and Federal requirements in the field. They address survivors’ immediate needs while collecting targeted information that supports operational decision making and resource allocation. By leveraging in-person, tailored information and referrals to whole community partners, DSA teams help FEMA best support the survivors who need the most help in heavily-affected areas.

In addition to program delivery enhancements, a best practice that arose from Hurricane Sandy was increased coordination across Federal and SLTT stakeholders to incorporate resiliency and improve collaboration for long-term recovery projects.

FEDERAL DISASTER RECOVERY COORDINATION

The National Disaster Recovery Framework (NDRF), first published in 2011, is a guide to enable effective Federal long-term recovery support to impacted SLTT jurisdictions. It provides a flexible structure that enables disaster recovery managers to operate in a unified and collaborative manner to most effectively restore, redevelop, and revitalize the health, social, economic, natural, and economic fabric of a community after a disaster.

NDRF Implementation During Hurricane Sandy

Hurricane Sandy was one of the first disasters following the NDRF’s publication for which the new Federal recovery coordination structure was fully implemented. The 6 Recovery Support Functions outlined in the NDRF were activated and staffed to facilitate Federal recovery coordination: Economic Recovery; Health and Social Services; Housing; Infrastructure Systems; Natural and Cultural Resources; and Community Planning & Capacity Building.

A New Jersey/New York Federal Leadership Resilience Collaborative (the Collaborative) was established and meets regularly to share information on key infrastructure projects and promote regional resilience. The Collaborative is comprised of Regional Administrators and other senior staff from FEMA, the U.S. Department of Interior, U.S. Department of Transportation, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, EPA, and HUD. The Collaborative provides an unparalleled forum for Federal officials to develop a strategic approach to foster a more comprehensive region-wide planning for risk reductions and provides opportunities for leveraging Federal dollars.

This early activation of the NDRF structure informed many lessons learned including further NDRF training for Federal personnel involved in the recovery, and synchronization of efforts between response and recovery activities.

Since Hurricane Sandy, the Federal coordination mission has further evolved. In 2012, the Federal Government established the Recovery Support Function Leadership Group (RSFLG), a senior-level entity that meets monthly to coordinate responsibilities and resolve operational, resource, and preparedness issues relating to interagency recovery activities at the National level. The RSFLG led the interagency Readiness Assessment initiative to identify capabilities and gaps for the execution of Federal recovery mission in terms of budget, training, staffing, experience and other resources to enhance coordination, establish priorities, and drive decision making. Since September 2011, FEMA has appointed 23 Federal Disaster Recovery Coordinators (FDRC) after major disasters. FEMA continues to hire and train FDRCs and cadre staff Nation-wide to ensure FEMA is prepared to assist States with extraordinary disaster recovery needs to ensure effective coordination of Federal resources and support of SLTT goals to build back more resilient communities.

FEMA and other Federal agencies continue to provide outreach to SLTT partners to help them apply NDRF concepts and principles in their own recovery preparedness efforts. FEMA hosts approximately 4 NDRF leadership workshops for Federal and SLTT officials each fiscal year. In 2015, FEMA published “Effective Coordination of Recovery Resources for State, Tribal, Territorial and Local Incidents.” This guide highlights the critical tasks and coordination challenges that State, local, Tribal and territorial governments most commonly face when managing a recovery process. It describes processes, considerations, and interdependencies of key actors in the recovery process to enhance coordination.

The second edition of the NDRF was published in June 2016. This new edition highlights and further defines 8 recovery core capabilities—critical functions to enable preparedness and recovery—as identified in the National Preparedness Goal. The primary value of the NDRF is its emphasis on preparing for recovery in advance of a disaster. The ability of a community to accelerate the recovery process begins with its efforts in pre-disaster preparedness, including coordinating with whole community partners, mitigating risks, incorporating community planning, identifying resources, and developing capacity to effectively manage the recovery process, through collaborative and inclusive planning.

NATIONAL FLOOD INSURANCE PROGRAM

The National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) is undergoing significant changes to strengthen the program, thanks in part to lessons learned from Hurricane Sandy. Historically, most insurance companies have excluded flood damage from homeowners' insurance. To address this need, Congress established the NFIP in 1968, which is administered by FEMA's Federal Insurance and Mitigation Administration (FIMA). The NFIP works with participating private insurance companies to market, sell, administer, and adjust claims for policyholders. By encouraging sound floodplain management efforts, the NFIP is estimated to save the Nation \$1.7 billion annually in avoided flood losses. The NFIP helps homeowners, renters, and non-residential property owners to understand their risk and take action to protect themselves financially against the most common and costly type of disaster in the United States.

The NFIP is currently \$23 billion in debt due to major events like Hurricanes Katrina and Sandy, as well as subsidized rates to many policyholders that did not reflect their true risk. Recognizing the need for reforms, in 2012 Congress acted by passing the *Biggert-Waters Flood Insurance Reform Act of 2012* (BW12) which required major changes to strengthen the fiscal soundness of the NFIP. In March 2014, Congress passed the *Homeowners Flood Insurance Affordability Act of 2014* (HFIAA), repealing and modifying certain provisions of BW12 while still requiring changes to major components of the NFIP including flood insurance, flood hazard mapping, grants, and flood plain management.

After Hurricane Sandy, allegations arose that private insurers involved with NFIP underpaid thousands of homeowners on their flood insurance claims. To address these concerns, FEMA subsequently set up an unprecedented Sandy Claims Review process and contacted 142,000 NFIP policyholders offering a review of their claim, with nearly 19,300 policy holders requesting one. To date, more than \$70 million in additional funds have been paid to policy holders. Throughout this process, FEMA began identifying areas for NFIP reform, including: Implementing changes to the appeals process that will allow any homeowner who is disputing a claim to have access to their files and have full visibility on the adjudication process; and updating the arrangement between FEMA and private insurers to allow for more oversight and operational adjustments.

To address legislative requirements and to further advance the program's goals, the NFIP established 5 key priorities for 2016:

- *Improve customer service.*—FIMA is coordinating with the Flood Insurance Advocate's office, outside customer experience industry experts, and individual policy holders to identify recommendations to improve the customer experience. Specific initiatives include simplifying products, redesigning the risk rating system to help customers clearly understand their flood risk, and improving program and mapping change communications to customers.
- *Improve understanding of risks.*—To properly mitigate risk through insurance, we must first get an accurate picture of the current and future risk profiles of our communities. In accordance with HFIAA requirements, FEMA is updating the flood mapping program for the NFIP. This program will be reviewed by the Technical Mapping Advisory Council (TMAC). When the updated program is applied, it will result in technically credible flood hazard data in all areas where Flood Insurance Rate Maps are prepared or updated.
- *Reduce risks.*—Mitigation projects can help improve community resilience, reduce future loss of life or property from flooding, and reduce future claims payments by the NFIP. The Flood Mitigation Assistance (FMA) program provides grant funds on an annual basis to SLTT governments for projects that reduce or eliminate the long-term risk of flood damage to structures insured by the NFIP. In fiscal year 2015, FEMA obligated more than \$71 million in FMA grant funds for mitigation activities affecting approximately 293 properties. These measures are expected to provide a savings to the NFIP of approximately \$142 million in reduced claims payments. For the fiscal year 2016 FMA Grant Program, \$199,000,000 is available to SLTT governments. The application period closed on June 15 and applications will be reviewed to determine eligibility and priority.
- *Engage private-sector insurers.*—Survivors of flooding can recover more quickly and more fully when they are insured against losses, whether they purchase that insurance from the NFIP or through the private market. Our priority is to ensure that as many citizens as possible are covered for flood damage. To better diversify financial risk in the future, FEMA is exploring reinsurance and insurance-linked securities as a way to improve the financial stability of the flood insurance program. We are currently working with the reinsurance indus-

try on catastrophic flood modeling, gathering quotes to pilot reinsurance for the NFIP, and exploring how to pay for reinsurance.

- *Continue to implement legislative reforms.*—FEMA has made significant progress towards implementing BW12 and HFIAA requirements. In addition to the initiatives previously discussed, our current key priorities include:
- Compiling data and beginning analysis of NFIP reform impacts on small businesses, non-profits, and houses of worship;
- Completing reports on policy holders whose premiums exceed 1 percent of their coverage value;
- Continuing work on regulation changes, including but not limited to installment plans and Write Your Own expense allowance with actual costs;
- Evaluating reinsurance options and developing a pilot program; and
- Designing an Affordability Framework that will provide policy options for an affordability program supported by qualitative and quantitative analyses.

CONCLUSION

Hurricane Sandy was one of the largest, most complex disasters we have responded to in the past decade. With the associated challenges comes the opportunity to develop innovations and efficiencies. We have been able to take lessons learned from the Sandy response and institutionalize changes and best practices to provide more streamlined delivery of assistance programs while incentivizing mitigation. Thanks to Congressional action and the passage of SRIA, FEMA now has additional authorities and more flexibility to administer programs and expedite recovery. We continue to work with Congress and our SLTT partners to build more resilient communities before and after a disaster.

Again, thank you for the opportunity to testify today. I look forward to any questions the subcommittee may have.

Mr. DONOVAN. Thank you, Mr. Byrne.

The Chair now recognizes Ms. McFadden for 5 minutes.

STATEMENT OF MARION MOLLEGEN MC FADDEN, DEPUTY ASSISTANT SECRETARY, GRANT PROGRAMS, OFFICE OF COMMUNITY PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT

Ms. MCFADDEN. Chairman Donovan, Ranking Member Payne, and Members of the subcommittee, I am Marion Mollegen McFadden, deputy assistant secretary for grant programs. On behalf of Secretary Julian Castro, I appreciate the opportunity to testify before you today.

My testimony will cover 3 areas: The status of HUD's work to support long-term recovery from Hurricane Sandy; HUD's use of Federal disaster funds to increase resilience; and Federal and regional coordination after Sandy.

Sandy was one of the most devastating and costly National disasters in the Nation's history, causing tens of billions of dollars in damage, as you mentioned, Mr. Chairman, and directly affecting more than 17 million people from Puerto Rico to Maine. Since enactment of the Disaster Relief Appropriations Act in January 2013, HUD has moved aggressively to ensure that homeowners and businesses received assistance, and that critical infrastructure investments are made with an eye toward future storms.

The HUD Sandy recovery effort has resulted in new rules to better protect Federal recovery investment, requiring, for example, higher elevation of repaired homes located in areas prone to flooding, and requiring that larger infrastructure projects become more resilient. To date, Sandy grantees have worked together to assist more than 14,000 single-family households across the region, to fully repair their homes, or to help them find new housing. Billions

of dollars of CDBG–DR assistance will also be invested in more resilient infrastructure.

Recovery, however, can never be fast enough. There remain areas where homeowners are still waiting to return to their homes, and HUD is working vigorously and continuously to find ways to accelerate the recovery. For example, for the first time HUD is allowing grantees to advance funds to homeowners to start reconstruction while withholding final payment until project completion. HUD has also used its authority to grant dozens of Sandy-specific waivers in order to meet local recovery needs, including allowing the development of protected infrastructure investment on private property.

Historically, disaster recovery has both done returning community assets to the location and condition that existed before the storm, but today extreme weather events demand a new focus on ensuring the resiliency of communities. HUD is investing new Federal resources in resiliency initiatives to serve as models for communities to prepare for the next disaster. Through the Rebuild By Design, or RBD initiative, HUD has allocated \$930 million for flood mitigation projects to increase resilience throughout the Sandy-affected region. Through a competitive process, Rebuild By Design led to the selection of 7 projects across the region, including one particularly innovative project now underway here on Staten Island.

Through RBD, New York State is investing \$60 million of CDBG–DR funds in the Living Breakwaters project in Tottenville to construct a system of breakwaters that will span the South Shore. In New Jersey, \$203 million of Rebuild By Design investments are also helping the cities of Hoboken, Weehawken and Jersey City to develop a new urban water strategy, with \$146 million of Federal transit funds, and providing another example of Federal and local coordination of resilient investment.

Similarly, to the National Disaster Resilience Competition, HUD has allocated nearly \$1 billion of CDBG disaster recovery funds to support 13 State and local governments and their investment in new resilient infrastructure and housing, including \$176 million for the city of New York to build new coastal flood protection for the neighborhoods of Southern Manhattan.

Beyond the city's investments, across the country, Shelby County, Tennessee will invest \$60 million to create new greenways to reduce flood risk in future storms. Iowa will receive more than \$96 million for watershed improvements and more resilient housing. California will invest more than \$70 million for development of a biomass facility in response to wildfire damage. These and other initiatives growing out of the Sandy recovery have led to unprecedented new partnerships for HUD and other Federal, State, and local agencies. One of the most successful examples of those partnerships, as Mr. Byrne mentioned, is the Sandy Regional Infrastructure Resilience Coordination Group and Collaborative, led by FEMA.

[Alarm.]

Mr. DONOVAN. We didn't know who was going to be speaking at the time.

[Laughter.]

Mr. DONOVAN. You get a set of steak knives.

[Laughter.]

[Alarm.]

Mr. DONOVAN. It is only going to last 45 minutes.

[Laughter.]

Mr. DONOVAN. That was some way to show off that they used the \$45 million to put a new alarm system in.

[Laughter.]

Mr. DONOVAN. Are we good, Lou?

Let's try, Ms. McFadden. I apologize.

Ms. MCFADDEN. Thank you, sir.

The regional coordination body is comprised of Federal, State, and local officials with responsibility for coordinating development of Sandy infrastructure projects. The South Shore has benefited from this new level of coordination. HUD has supported residential buyouts, replenishment of dunes and breakwaters. FEMA has supported repairs and mitigation at a wastewater treatment plant and medical center. The National Park Service has supported remediation and improvement in Great Kills Park. Federal Highway Administration grants have been provided for road repairs and improvements. The Army Corps of Engineers has launched a coastal storm risk management study.

Perhaps the best part about this regional coordination is that it has redefined how Federal agencies are working together. As a result of our work in assisting the Sandy recovery effort, Federal, State, and local partners are now better positioned to hit the ground running in the future in ways that were previously unknown.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. I would be pleased to answer any questions you may have.

[The prepared statement of Ms. McFadden follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF MARION MOLLEGEN MCFADDEN

JULY 11, 2016

Chairman Donovan, Ranking Member Payne, and Members of the subcommittee, I am Marion Mollegen McFadden, deputy assistant secretary for grant programs. On behalf of Secretary Julián Castro, I appreciate the opportunity to testify today regarding disaster recovery efforts related to Hurricane Sandy and how those investments in recovery are helping New York City and communities Nation-wide become more resilient and better prepared to withstand the next, inevitable extreme weather event. As former chief operating officer and acting executive director of the President's Hurricane Sandy Rebuilding Task Force, and as a native of Connecticut with friends and family affected by Hurricane Sandy in New York and New Jersey, I have a deep understanding of the recovery needs of this region. In my current position, I am responsible for overseeing key programs that promote affordable housing and community development, including the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program and CDBG-Disaster Recovery (CDBG-DR) grants. These grants help communities recover from and rebuild after natural disasters like Hurricane Sandy and, in doing so, to become more resilient.

Today, I will cover 3 subjects: (1) The status of HUD's work to support long-term and resilient recovery from Hurricane Sandy; (2) the Department's initiatives to use disaster recovery resources to foster increased resilience; and (3) Federal and regional coordination of Sandy recovery efforts and how those efforts may serve as a template for future Federal coordination in response to major disasters and assist in building communities across the Nation that are better prepared to withstand those disasters.

STATUS OF LONG-TERM AND RESILIENT RECOVERY FROM SANDY

Almost 4 years after Sandy, I am sure you need no reminder that this storm was one of the most devastating and costly natural disasters in the Nation's history. Sandy caused tens of billions of dollars in damage and had immense varied impacts across much of the eastern United States, with damage most severe in New York, including the city of New York, as well as New Jersey, Connecticut, Rhode Island, and Maryland.

Thousands of businesses and more than 650,000 homes were damaged or destroyed. The storm was directly responsible for over 150 fatalities across 8 countries; more than 70 in the United States alone. It yielded major flooding, structural damage, and power loss to over 8.5 million homes and businesses, directly affecting more than 17 million people from Puerto Rico to Maine.

The Disaster Relief Appropriations Act (the Act) was signed into law on January 29, 2013, providing \$15.2 billion in CDBG-DR funding to address Hurricane Sandy and other qualifying events that occurred in 2011, 2012, and prospectively, 2013.¹ HUD moved aggressively to implement the Act and to ensure that the specific requirements of the law are met. HUD allocates CDBG-DR funds to States and local governments who in turn, working with HUD and the community, design and implement customized recovery programs. HUD and Sandy grantees have worked together to ensure that homeowners and businesses receive timely and needed assistance in often densely-populated, urban environments; and that critical infrastructure is not only repaired but is located, relocated, or redesigned to meet the challenges posed by extreme weather events arising from climate change.

On February 6, 2013, HUD announced the first allocation of \$5.4 billion of CDBG-DR funds to 5 States and the city of New York to support Sandy recovery efforts. On March 5, 2013, HUD published a *Federal Register* Notice outlining the requirements for the use of those funds.

As of July 2016, HUD had fully allocated the \$15.2 billion available under the Act to address the damage caused by Sandy and other disasters in 2011, 2012, and 2013. Through a series of *Federal Register* Notices, HUD also established new rules to better protect these Federal investments, requiring, for example, higher elevation of repaired homes located in areas prone to flooding and requiring that larger infrastructure projects be built or rebuilt to be more resilient and to better withstand future storms.

The Act required that HUD obligate all funds by September 30, 2017 and recipients expend funds within 2 years of obligation. Congress also provided authority to extend this expenditure deadline, if needed. In prior appropriations of CDBG-DR funds, Congress set no limits on the time in which State and local governments must spend funds for recovery. This new provision introduced both an imperative among HUD grantees to expedite the commitment of funds, but has also caused grantees to move cautiously in "obligating" funds because each new obligation triggers the "2-year clock" on that portion of their grant.

To date, Sandy grantees have used CDBG-DR funds to assist more than 14,000 single-family households across the region to fully repair their homes or to help them find new housing. Thousands of small businesses have completed their repairs or have been provided with working capital or other assistance needed to return to operations. When fully expended, billions of dollars of CDBG-DR assistance will also have been invested in infrastructure repair, including investments to make communities more resilient when the next disaster strikes.

Recovery, however, can never be fast enough for affected families, homeowners, and other victims. There remain areas where too many homeowners are still awaiting the housing assistance needed to return to their homes. HUD is working continuously with its Sandy grantees to explore ways to further expedite recovery. In housing rehabilitation, for instance, for the first time, HUD is allowing grantees to advance funds to homeowners to start reconstruction and to make interim payments during construction, while withholding the final payment until project completion. Also for the first time, HUD allowed homeowners to be reimbursed for work they completed before applying to CDBG-DR funded housing programs operated by New York State and the city of New York.

HUD has also used authority under the Act to grant dozens of program-wide and grantee-specific waivers and to establish alternative statutory and regulatory requirements related to income documentation requirements, new housing construction and rental assistance—all geared to meeting local recovery needs and to remove

¹ The law provided \$16 billion, however since these funds were appropriated in fiscal year 2013, they were subject to sequestration. This reduced the amount of CDBG-DR funds available under the Act to \$15.2 billion, a 5 percent reduction.

unnecessary barriers to recovery. In the area of environmental regulation, the Act provided new authority to use the environmental reviews adopted by other Federal agencies to meet HUD's requirements, and HUD and the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) have executed an agreement that allows our grantees to use FEMA environmental reviews. Grantees have made good use of this authority.

For HUD and any Federal agency charged with providing funds to assist in disaster recovery, the challenge is always balancing the imperative to provide timely assistance to storm-ravaged communities with the equally important priority of ensuring that funds are used appropriately and to maximum effect. Working with HUD's Office of the Inspector General (OIG), we have taken several important steps to strike this balance in Sandy recovery. The Sandy recovery has afforded HUD and the OIG new opportunities to collaborate in efforts to ensure a timely and fiscally sound recovery, including monthly conference calls to identify shared areas of concern and to coordinate monitoring and auditing strategies.

RESILIENCE INITIATIVES

Historically, disaster recovery has focused on returning community assets to the location and condition that existed before the storm. The increased frequency and extreme nature of weather events, however, demands a new focus on disaster mitigation and ensuring the resiliency of Federal investments in housing, business, and infrastructure. The resilience policies arising from Sandy recovery include the elevation of substantially damaged homes above the base flood elevation requirements and resilience performance standards for infrastructure. HUD is also investing new Federal resources in disaster mitigation initiatives to serve as models for communities Nation-wide as they prepare for the next disaster.

Rebuild by Design

HUD allocated \$930 million under the Act for flood mitigation projects developed through Rebuild by Design or "RBD." RBD was a planning and design competition to increase resilience in the Sandy-affected region. RBD was administered by HUD under the America COMPETES Reauthorization Act, in partnership with philanthropic, academic, and nonprofit organizations. HUD solicited the best talent and ideas from around the world to seek innovative solutions for communities working to rebuild and adapt in response to the disaster and to the future risks presented by natural hazards and climate change.

The RBD competition resulted in the selection of 7 projects across the region, including one particularly innovative project that is underway right now, here on Staten Island.

Sandy was particularly devastating for the Island's South Shore, with Tottenville, on the Island's southernmost point, experiencing some of the region's most destructive waves. Today, through RBD, New York State is investing \$60 million of CDBG-DR funds to construct a system of in-water breakwaters in Tottenville. These breakwaters will be constructed of a concrete and recycled glass composite and will be seeded with oysters that will proliferate and physically grow the breakwater over time. This project, "Living Breakwaters," is designed to provide the risk reduction associated with breakwaters along with environmental benefits—including improved water quality and new marine habitat. Once completed, Living Breakwaters will form a "necklace" of in-water structures along this stretch of Staten Island's South Shore.

Living Breakwaters is also notable for its connection to other CDBG-DR investments that are underway here and are designed to make Staten Island more resilient to the next storm. Through its CDBG-DR-funded Community Reconstruction program, the State is investing \$6.75 million in the Tottenville Shoreline Protection Project, which entails new flood risk management features as an additional coastal resiliency strategy for the area. These investments are in addition to the tens of millions of dollars in CDBG-DR funds expended by the State on Staten Island to buy out homeowners whose homes remain in harm's way and the tens of millions more in CDBG-DR funds expended by the city of New York to elevate homes on the Island and to make them more resilient.

Across the Arthur Kill and the Kill Van Kull in New Jersey, \$230 million of RBD investments are also helping the cities of Hoboken, Weehawken, and Jersey City develop a new urban water strategy through the "Resist, Delay, Store, and Discharge" project. The project will include flood barriers designed to blend into the urban environment, green infrastructure elements and water pumping and discharge systems to better protect these low-lying communities from future flooding events. HUD's investment there is being further supported by \$146 million of Federal Transit funds to better protect the critical transportation infrastructure that is so important to not only New Jersey, but to New York as well. Federal and local coordination on these

investments ensures that transit planning and investment is integrated with community development and resilience efforts.

Across the harbor, the city of New York will invest \$335 million of CDBG–DR funds for an RBD project to protect the vulnerable communities located in the floodplain on Manhattan’s eastside, including thousands of public housing residents. Through the Eastside Coastal Resiliency project, the city will build a flood risk management system that will include: (1) A landscaped berm or related risk reduction methods in East River Park and its adjacent areas; (2) permanent and deployable walls and pavilions within East River Park and its adjacent areas; (3) new or improved bridges over the Franklin D. Roosevelt East River Drive; and/or (4) related public amenities.

NATIONAL DISASTER RESILIENCE COMPETITION

In January 2016, Secretary Castro announced the winners of the National Disaster Resilience Competition (NDRC), which exemplifies an expanded commitment by HUD to support State and local efforts to better prepare for the next disaster. NDRC projects are the result of an extensive community-led planning process and reflect an understanding by those communities that: (i) The costs of recovery from future disasters can be reduced by investments today in innovative and workable mitigation and resilience strategies; and (ii) investments in mitigation and resilience can also grow the local economy.

HUD allocated nearly \$1 billion of CDBG–DR funds provided under the Act to the NDRC in order to support grassroots-driven investment in new resilient infrastructure and housing, including \$176 million for the city of New York and \$35 million for New York State.

The NDRC took place in two phases, with final winners selected from 40 States and local communities that were designated as finalists. The 40 finalists were asked to submit specific projects that would advance their community’s resilience plans. More than 25 Federal agencies or offices, and 100 industry experts were involved in the implementation of the 16-month long competition. In the end, 13 State and local governments were selected to receive funds for innovative resilience projects that will not only help them recover from a recent disaster, but to better prepare for the next one. The effort benefitted from a philanthropic partnership with the Rockefeller Foundation, which dedicated \$8 million to teaching competing jurisdictions best practices in the growing field of resilience and assisting them with planning.

The range of ideas and strategies emerging from the competition has been simply remarkable. Initially, \$181 million was set aside for projects in New York and New Jersey, but the Sandy NDRC proposals were so strong that they were awarded a combined total of \$231 million for the city of New York, New York State, and New Jersey.

Shelby County, Tennessee will invest \$60 million of CDBG–DR funding to create new recreation areas and greenways in the floodplain to reduce the flood risk in future storms. Minot, North Dakota will use \$74 million of CDBG–DR funds to buy out homes that are in harms’ way, restore open space, and construct new affordable housing away from high-risk areas but with better access to transit, jobs, and services—strengthening community prospects for economic growth and mobility. The State of Iowa will receive more than \$96 million to monitor and improve nine watersheds State-wide that were impacted by flooding, while also rehabilitating flood-damaged housing to make it more resilient.

NDRC also recognizes that preparing for natural disasters is not just about flooding. California will invest more than \$70 million of CDBG–DR funds in response to the 2013 Rim Fire. Since that 2013 event, large wildfires throughout the State have burned nearly 400,000 acres and destroyed hundreds of homes and structures. The California NDRC project will pilot a Community and Watershed Resilience program in Tuolumne County, through development of a biomass and wood products facility for biomass removed from the forest through restoration and thinning. The project also includes community resilience centers to meet the needs of rural communities in times of disaster while also providing job training opportunities in forest and watershed management.

FEDERAL AND REGIONAL COORDINATION IN DISASTER RECOVERY

RBD and NDRC both represent initiatives growing out of the Sandy recovery that have precipitated new partnerships for HUD and other Federal, State, and local agencies. Following a disaster, HUD has historically partnered with FEMA and the Small Business Administration, to access those agencies’ data to determine the unmet housing, economic revitalization, and infrastructure needs that remain to be

addressed using CDBG–DR funds. Sandy recovery efforts, however, have resulted in an unprecedented unified Federal and regional recovery effort.

One of the most tangible and successful examples of that coordination is the Sandy Regional Infrastructure Resilience Coordination Group (SRIRC), led by HUD and FEMA. The SRIRC is comprised of Federal, State, and local officials with responsibility for coordinating the development of Sandy public infrastructure projects. Beginning in January 2014 and prior to the identification of specific State and local infrastructure projects, the SRIRC met monthly to better understand agency funding streams, statutory and regulatory requirements and other mandates that could impact Federal interagency coordination to support various types of infrastructure investments. The SRIRC developed an evolving database that allows it to identify Federally-supported projects, and to map those projects to identify geographic areas of overlap where interagency coordination is needed. The SRIRC has also formed sector-specific teams of Federal, State, and local officials in the areas such as transportation, energy, and coastal resilience to focus on project scope and time lines, including the Federal permitting process and construction sequencing. Grantees have praised the SRIRC as a useful forum for coordinating the most complex infrastructure projects, which touch multiple Federal, State, and local agencies for review and permitting.

The South Shore of Staten Island has benefitted from this new level of coordination. Federal agencies have taken an area-wide look at resilience that considers and coordinates short-term and long-term Federal investments. HUD has supported residential buyouts, dunes, and breakwaters; FEMA has supported repairs and mitigation at a wastewater treatment plant and medical center; the National Park Service has supported remediation and improvements at Great Kills Park; Federal Highways Administration grants have been provided for road repairs and improvements; and the Army Corps of Engineers has launched a coastal storm risk management study.

Perhaps most exciting about this regional coordination is that it has redefined how Federal agencies are working together. As a result of our work in assisting the Sandy recovery effort, Federal, State, and local partners will now be more able to hit the ground running in the future, in ways previously unknown, because agency staff have a vastly greater understanding of each other's programs and procedures and we know the right people to contact for speedy resolution of issues. HUD has played an important role, working with FEMA to establish the Unified Federal Review. The UFR was established by 11 Federal departments and agencies to expedite environmental and historic preservation reviews for future disaster declarations.

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify today. I would be pleased to answer any questions you may have.

Mr. DONOVAN. Thank you, Ms. McFadden.

The Chair now recognizes Mr. Zarrilli for 5 minutes.

STATEMENT OF DANIEL A. ZARRILLI, CHIEF RESILIENCE OFFICER, OFFICE OF THE MAYOR, CITY OF NEW YORK, NEW YORK

Mr. ZARRILLI. Good morning, Chair Donovan and Ranking Member Payne. My name is Daniel Zarrilli. I am the senior director for climate policy and programs at the New York City Mayor's Office. I would like to congratulate Chairman Donovan on his appointment as Chair of this committee, and on behalf of Mayor Bill de Blasio I want to thank the Members for this opportunity to speak about our efforts to build a more prepared and more resilient city.

Nearly 4 years ago Hurricane Sandy hit New York City with unprecedented force, tragically killing 44 New Yorkers and causing over \$19 billion in damages and lost economic activity in the city. Here on Staten Island we saw some of the worst of Sandy. In the Staten Island University Hospital, where we are having this discussion today, it was nearly inundated, which is why we were proud to support the hospital with \$28 million for a resiliency program, and why we are working with so many partners on critical resiliency investments on Staten Island and across the city.

Today I plan to briefly describe the city's resiliency program and how we are investing to ensure that our city will be ready to withstand and is much stronger from the impacts of climate change and other 21st Century threats. I also plan to offer suggestions for how Congress and our Federal partners can continue to support cities like New York with disaster recovery and preparing for the inevitable impacts that climate change will bring.

In the aftermath of Sandy, we put forth a comprehensive plan to rebuild the neighborhoods hardest hit by Sandy and to also prepare our city for the impacts of climate change. That plan, "A Stronger, More Resilient New York," launched our over \$20 billion resiliency program, improving our coastline, upgrading our buildings, rebuilding homes, improving our infrastructure, and generally improving our neighborhoods across the city.

In April 2015, Mayor de Blasio expanded and accelerated that work through OneNYC program. With OneNYC, we are putting in place a multi-layered resiliency plan, making our city safer, and we are holding ourselves accountable for these results by publishing an annual progress report of that work, the last of which was published in April 2016.

In so many ways, Federal support has been critical to these efforts. We have been blessed with the necessary funding, we have seen innovation, and we have witnessed challenges along the way. In the spirit of constructive feedback, I would like to offer several recommendations for how Congress and our Federal partners can better support cities as we continue to recover from Sandy and prepare for the future.

First, in response to Hurricane Sandy, the city and FEMA developed a hotel sheltering program and our Rapid Repairs Program, two innovative sheltering solutions tailored to an urban environment where traditional approaches like trailers are unworkable. Between November 2012 and September 2013, the hotel program provided emergency shelter in city hotels to over 1,300 displaced households. Rapid Repairs restored basic services to over 20,000 flooded homes and helping those households avoid long-term displacement. Both programs could be a model for responding to displacement in the future.

Second, Congress authorized an innovative FEMA public assistance pilot program called Section 428. To date, the city has been the single biggest user of this program, with nearly \$5.9 billion worth of infrastructure investments underway. This more flexible and accountable program should be made a permanent feature of the Federal Government's disaster response and resiliency toolkit.

Third, FEMA's National Flood Insurance Program requires fundamental reform. Congress should act to expand mitigation options and funding, including increasing pre-disaster mitigation funding and offering partial credit on insurance premiums for partial mitigation measures; and No. 2, to ensure the affordability of flood insurance for those most in need of its coverage.

Fourth, the city is working toward a successful resolution to its appeal of FEMA's 2015 flood insurance rate maps, which we have demonstrated overstate the size of the city's 100-year flood plain due to inaccuracies in FEMA's underlying analysis. We urge FEMA to resolve the appeal and adopt accurate flood maps for the city.

Fifth, FEMA's Hazard Mitigation Grant Program has been a mechanism for the city to fund long-term and cost-effective resiliency projects, but to ensure that funds go where they are needed most, FEMA should consider issuing guidance to States to direct a fair share of HMGP dollars to local jurisdictions most affected by disaster.

Sixth, climate change is proving we need to improve Federal coordination to expedite implementation of key projects. For example, as you noted, although \$32 million in USDA funds have been secured for bluebelts here on Staten Island, it is stalling because USDA and Army Corps can't agree on conservation easements. Benefit/cost ratios could be rationalized across agencies since each agency has its own methodology. These methodologies should be amended to support faster recovery and improved so as not to disadvantage low-income communities when comparing mitigation projects. Similarly, Congress should also urge Federal agencies to coordinate environmental reviews when multiple agencies contribute funding to a single project.

Finally, as we all know, fuel shortages plagued the city for weeks after Hurricane Sandy, and the lack of information sharing regarding the fuel supply made decision making difficult. Congress should urge the Department of Energy to establish data-sharing requirements for the industry to report critical facility-specific information.

To conclude, as our understanding of the impacts of climate change continues to improve, we are improving now to reduce risk and prepare for the future. This requires even greater partnership with Congress and the Federal Government to support local climate adaptation. We thank our Federal partners here today for their tireless work to support recovery and resiliency in New York City and urge them to continue to help us maintain our momentum as we build a more resilient city.

I would like to thank Chairman Donovan and Ranking Member Payne for their leadership as we work together to confront the challenges that climate change will bring to our Nation. Thank you very much.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Zarrilli follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF DANIEL A. ZARRILLI

JULY 11, 2016

INTRODUCTION

Good afternoon. My name is Daniel Zarrilli and I am the senior director for climate policy and programs and the chief resilience officer at the New York City Mayor's Office. I want to congratulate Congressman Donovan on his recent appointment as chair of the Subcommittee on Emergency Preparedness, Response, and Communications. On behalf of New York City, we are honored to have a New Yorker in this unique position of leadership. I would like to thank the Chairman and all the Members for the opportunity to speak today about New York City's experience building a more prepared and resilient city.

Nearly 4 years ago, Hurricane Sandy hit New York City with unprecedented force, tragically killing 44 New Yorkers, and causing over \$19 billion in damages and lost economic activity. Neighborhoods were devastated: 88,700 buildings were flooded; 23,400 businesses were impacted; and our region's infrastructure was seriously disrupted. Over 2,000,000 residents were without power for weeks and fuel shortages persisted for over a month. In short, Sandy highlighted New York City's vulner-

ability to climate change and rising seas and underscores the actions we've taken since then to build a stronger, more resilient city.

It is particularly meaningful that we here on the East Shore of Staten Island at Staten Island University Hospital (SIUH) discussing resiliency. This neighborhood saw some of the worst of Sandy, and this hospital was nearly inundated, which is why we were proud to support the hospital with \$28 million for its resiliency program, and why we are working with many partners on critical neighborhood infrastructure investments, coastal protections, and housing recovery efforts.

Today, I aim to accomplish two things. First, I would like to walk the committee through our multi-layered resiliency plan and how we are making investments to ensure that our neighborhoods, economy, and public services will be ready to withstand and emerge stronger from the impacts of climate change and other 21st Century threats. Second, I would like to offer suggestions on how Congress and our Federal partners can better support cities with preparing for the inevitable physical and humanitarian disasters that climate change will bring.

PLANS FOR THE FUTURE

Special Initiative for Rebuilding and Resiliency

In the aftermath of Hurricane Sandy, it was imperative that New York City emerge from Hurricane Sandy a stronger and more resilient city—one that did not just prepare for the next storm, but one that invested against a wider range of threats—all guided by the best available science. We turned to the New York City Panel on Climate Change (NPCC), an independent body of leading climate scientists who advise the Mayor on the latest climate change projections. The latest projections are challenging.

By the 2050s, according to just the middle-range projections by the NPCC, average New York City temperatures are projected to increase between 4.1°F and 5.7°F, annual precipitation is projected to increase between 4 and 11 percent, and sea levels are projected to rise between 11 inches and 21 inches, on top of a foot of sea level rise that we have already witnessed since 1900. And extreme events, like flooding, are becoming more frequent and more intense. What this means is that a similar Sandy-like event in 2050 could cause \$90 billion in damage and lost economic activity—compared to Sandy's \$19 billion.¹

In 2013, based on these NPCC projections, the Special Initiative for Rebuilding and Resiliency (or SIRR) put forth a comprehensive plan to rebuild neighborhoods hardest hit by Sandy and to prepare our city-wide infrastructure for the future. The resulting document, *A Stronger, More Resilient New York*, described the city's \$20 billion resiliency program that is now well underway.²

One New York: The Plan for a Strong and Just City

In April 2015, Mayor de Blasio released the ground-breaking *One New York: The Plan for a Strong and Just City* (OneNYC), a strategic plan for inclusive growth and climate action.³ OneNYC, supported by our partnership with 100 Resilient Cities, expanded and accelerated that SIRR program.

It also injected a focus on equity into the city's climate resiliency program. Equity and climate change are inescapably linked. Although climate change affects everyone, its impacts are not equally felt. Simply put, the poorest and most vulnerable are the hardest hit and least able to recover. That is why addressing the growing economic and social inequality facing the city's most vulnerable communities is now at the heart of our resiliency work.

Putting Our Plans into Action

With OneNYC, our multi-layered approach to resiliency encompasses 4 key areas—neighborhoods, buildings, infrastructure, and coastal defense. I will briefly describe a few key highlights of our accomplishments in those areas.⁴

¹ For an in-depth look at the NPCC's projections, see, *Building the Knowledge Base for Climate Resilience: New York City Panel on Climate Change 2015 Report*, vol. 1336 of Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences, January 2015, <http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/nyas.2015.1336.issue-1/issuetoc>.

² The full version of *A Stronger, More Resilient New York* can be found at: <http://www.nyc.gov/html/sirr/html/report/report.shtml>.

³ The full version of *One New York: The Plan for a Strong and Just City* can be found at: <http://www.nyc.gov/html/onenyc/downloads/pdf/publications/OneNYC.pdf>.

⁴ One April 22, 2016, Mayor De Blasio released the *OneNYC 2016 Progress Report*, detailing the city's year-to-date progress delivering on our OneNYC commitments. The full version of the report can be found at: <http://www1.nyc.gov/html/onenyc/downloads/pdf/publications/OneNYC-2016-Progress-Report.pdf>.

Neighborhoods

Our neighborhoods—the places where we live, work, and play—are the first layer of our resiliency efforts. Our goal is to make every single New Yorker safer by strengthening the social and economic resiliency of their communities.

We have improved risk communication and emergency preparedness by updating our evacuation maps, releasing a new comprehensive hazard mitigation plan, and expanding neighborhood-based programs. We are investing to make emergency shelter sites accessible to New Yorkers with disabilities.

We are also focused on small business resiliency. To date, we have invested over \$54 million in Sandy impacted small businesses. We have also created over 2,000 jobs and hired over 900 residents from Sandy-impacted areas, continuing our commitment to ensure that New Yorkers have opportunities to participate in the recovery process in their neighborhoods.⁵

Buildings

The second layer is working to upgrade the city's buildings to withstand climate change impacts. Sandy showed us that structures built to the latest codes perform well in storms and better protect their inhabitants. We have learned from this and have already upgraded the city's building codes, including 16 new local laws to account for vulnerabilities related to extreme weather and climate change.

Infrastructure

The third layer of the city's multilayered resiliency strategy is adapting the city's infrastructure and supply chains to climate impacts. We are directly investing billions of dollars into the city's infrastructure and we are collaborating with our many regional infrastructure partners to ensure that their investments align with the city's vision for resiliency and affordability.

Coastal Defense

Finally, the fourth layer of our OneNYC resiliency program is strengthening our coastal defenses against sea level rise, wave action, and storm surge. When Sandy struck, our coastal defenses were nearly non-existent. In response to the devastation, the city released and began implementing its first-ever comprehensive coastal protection plan. Using this as a foundation, OneNYC aims to further reduce the city's coastal vulnerabilities.

SUPPORTING CITIES

As we seek to implement this recovery and resiliency program, Federal support has been critical. Throughout the recovery process, we have seen the innovations that Federal agencies can make to adjust to the specific challenges of urban disasters, and we have also witnessed their limitations. The converging effects of urbanization and climate change present an enormous challenge to cities, which in turn, will require even greater Federal support. I would now like to offer several options for how Congress and our Federal partners can better support cities with preparing for the magnitude and urgency of climate change.

Support Urban Mass Shelter Programs

First, the city's FEMA-funded programs to shelter New Yorkers displaced by Hurricane Sandy is a clear example of what works.

Sheltering survivors displaced by a disaster is a challenge anywhere, but is often made far more complex in a densely-populated urban environment, like New York, where traditional approaches (such as trailers) are unworkable.⁶ Sandy displaced nearly 70,000 people across the city, completely overwhelming our emergency shelter options. In response, the city in partnership with FEMA developed the Hotel Essential Sheltering Program (HESP) and the Rapid Repairs Program (RRP), two innovative sheltering solutions tailored to an urban environment.

Between November 18, 2012 and September 30, 2013 HESP, provided safe emergency shelter in hotels across the city to over 1,300 households displaced due to the storm. RRP restored heat, hot water, and power to affected residences and sealed up damaged building envelopes, thereby reducing the demand for other shelter options and allowing individuals to return to or remain in their homes. In total, RRP

⁵ For an extensive list of city's resiliency projects currently underway, please visit: <https://maps.nyc.gov/resiliency/>.

⁶ For in-depth look at the success of the Rapid Repairs Program see Danielle Baussan and Miranda Peterson, *Lessons from the Storm*, Center for American Progress, October 2015.

helped 20,000 households avoid long-term displacement by restoring basic services in less than 4 months and significant savings to the taxpayer.⁷

Both programs allowed the city to prevent a public health crisis and provide sheltering in a cost-effective way.⁸ And although Rapid Repairs was ad hoc, it worked. Had the city not been limited by red tape, it would have worked even better since we are now returning to some of these same homes in our Build it Back program. Nevertheless, Rapid Repairs was a clear success and, with the right support, could be a model for responding to mass displacement in urban contexts in the future.

Make FEMA's 428 Program Permanent

Second, Congress authorized an innovative Public Assistance pilot program called Section 428, designed to expedite disaster recovery, improve flexibility to support better mitigation investments, and reduce overall administrative costs.

To date, the city has been the single biggest user of this program, with nearly \$5.9 billion worth of Section 428 projects. From our point of view, this program has been a success; the capped grants incentivize efficiency while providing flexibility to reprogram funds when needed for enhanced mitigation. We support the Section 428 Program and believe it should be made a permanent feature of the Federal Government's disaster response and resiliency toolkit.

Reform FEMA's National Flood Insurance Program

Third, FEMA's National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) requires fundamental reform. Thanks to Congressional action in 2014, devastating rate increases have been slowed down, but the risks of continued premium increases, foreclosures, and loss of value remains.

The NFIP is due to be reauthorized in 2017. Congress should act to: (1) Better protect ratepayers and taxpayers by mandating FEMA to expand mitigation options and funding, including increasing pre-disaster mitigation funding and offering partial credit on insurance premiums for partial mitigation measures that make sense for the building stock of a dense urban environment, and (2) ensure affordability of flood insurance for those least able to pay for this vital financial product based on the National Academy of Sciences affordability reports. This is an urgent matter given that flooding is the fastest-growing and most costly natural disaster in the country, a problem which climate change will only make worse.

Ensure FEMA's Flood Maps are Accurate

Fourth, the city is working towards a successful resolution to its appeal of FEMA's 2015 Preliminary Flood Insurance Rate Maps, which overstate the size of the city's 100-year floodplain due to inaccuracies in FEMA's underlying analysis, which ultimately affects not just the city and Westchester, but much of coastal New Jersey as well. Conveying flood risk accurately to our residents is among the city's top priorities. Inaccurate FIRMs would not only undermine the integrity upon which the city's resiliency program rests. They would place an unnecessary financial burden on low and moderate income residents. Accurate flood maps are also critical to the success of the NFIP. That is why the city is urging FEMA to resolve the appeal and adopt accurate flood maps, consistent with the city's appeal, as quickly as possible.⁹

Improve FEMA's Hazard Mitigation Grant Program

Fifth, FEMA's Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP) has been a useful mechanism for New York City to fund long-term and cost-effective resiliency projects. Through Section 404 of the Stafford Act, this post-disaster grant is available after a Presidential declaration, and funds are awarded to States based on a percentage of State-wide damage.

In practice, this means that funds may not necessarily be directed to areas that suffered the greatest damage. For example, New York City incurred nearly 70 percent of Sandy-related damage in New York State but received less than 30 percent of HMGP funds. To ensure funds go where they are needed most, FEMA should con-

⁷ A study by FEMA's chief economist found that temporary housing in three events prior to Sandy cost on average \$173,000 per unit. The unit cost for RRP was approximately \$30,700 per unit. See Darlene Bouma, Chief Economist to Brad Kieserman, Chief Counsel, December 3, 2012, FEMA Preliminary Business Case for Sheltering and Temporary Essential Power (STEP) Pilot Program. FEMA-4085-DR-NY.

⁸[Sic.]

⁹ The city has been collaborating on this issue with regional partners including the Port Authority of NY & NJ, who recently won their mapping appeal at Newark Liberty International Airport.

sider issuing guidance to States to direct a fair share of HMGP dollars to jurisdictions affected by the applicable disaster declaration.

Improving Federal Coordination

Sixth, climate change is proving that we need every tool at our disposal to mitigate its effects. This means cities like New York are looking to Congress to expand funding eligibility and improve Federal coordination for flood mitigation strategies, like stormwater pumps and storage tanks, as well as non-structural measures like bluebelts and green infrastructure, to manage the risks from coastal flooding and heavy rainfall.

For example, although \$32 million in Federal USDA Emergency Watershed Protection funds has been secured for an award-winning Bluebelt Project here on Staten Island, it is stalling because the USDA and USACE cannot agree on conservation easements at the project site. Both Federal agencies want to use the land for the exact same thing. Congress should continue to underscore the imperative that both Federal agencies come to an agreement immediately.

We are also looking to Congress to help rationalize how Federal agencies calculate their benefit-cost ratios, since each agency has its own methodology. These methodologies should be streamlined to support faster recovery and mitigation investments. Furthermore, benefit-cost ratios are biased by higher property values, placing lower-income communities at a disadvantage when comparing mitigation projects.

Similarly, Congress should also urge Federal agencies to coordinate environmental review policies. For example, HUD and FEMA fund the same projects here in the city. However, despite HUD performing an environmental review, FEMA may not allow a project to move forward until its own review is complete. As a result, vital housing resiliency projects are often delayed by these duplicate efforts and administrative burdens.

Improve Situational Awareness of the Liquid Fuel Supply

And finally, New York City experienced fuel shortages for weeks following Hurricane Sandy. The lack of data and information sharing regarding the fuel supply and movements created a situation where public-sector officials were unable to maintain adequate situational awareness to make sound public safety decisions. Congress should urge the Department of Energy to establish data-sharing requirements for the industry to report critical information on a facility-specific basis. Federal agencies should also consider conducting regional exercises and drills to address fuel supply product emergencies or shortages.

CONCLUSION

To conclude, our understanding of the impacts of climate change continues to improve, highlighting the actions that we must take to reduce risk and prepare for the future. To do this, we will require an expanded partnership with Congress and the Federal Government to better support local climate preparedness and resiliency. We thank our Federal partners here today for their tireless work to support recovery and resiliency in New York City and urge them to help us maintain our momentum as we build a more resilient city. And I'd like to thank Chairman Donovan and the committee Members for their leadership as we work together to confront the challenges that climate change will bring to our Nation. Thank you.

Mr. DONOVAN. Thank you, Mr. Zarrilli.

I thank each of you not only for your testimony today but for your service to our Nation, particularly the communities which Don and I represent.

We have a few questions for the panel. I will begin just by asking Mr. Byrne, one of the big projects that I spoke about that Staten Island is very concerned with is the sea wall that is being constructed by the Army Corps of Engineers. It is our understanding that they are building this to specifications that FEMA has set, standards that FEMA has set, so that the people who live in the flood maps will see reductions in the premiums to their flood insurance. It would also include mitigation in those premiums for people who still live in the parts of the flood zone that still need the wall to be built.

Is that coming along as we all believe it to be?

Mr. BYRNE. Yes, Mr. Chairman. First of all, we are working closely with the Corps on this. The Corps clearly understands what the threshold is to allow us to act. It is really what we call the 50/100 percent rule. It is 50 percent complete, 100 percent funded. The Corps is well aware of this. We are in regular contact with them on this, and we will take the actions that are appropriate once those two thresholds are met.

Mr. DONOVAN. Wonderful. Thank you.

I would like to ask yourself and Ms. McFadden if you could explain to me, as I said also in my testimony, that the housing stock in New York is different than it is in other parts of our country. Many of our residents live in attached housing, whether it be in row houses or townhouses, or whether it be in an apartment building. It is near impossible for the residents of those types of housing to be able to abide by the elevation standards that are required in order to find relief in their premiums for their insurance.

Is HUD, is FEMA, is anybody working on factors that those folks can mitigate to protect their homes without elevating that will allow them to see the same relief in their flood insurance premiums as others who are elevating are seeing?

Ms. MCFADDEN. Yes, Congressman, I agree that this is a real problem, and we are working very closely with FEMA, as well as with the city of New York, to see what flexibility we can find. But it is a tough problem in that we want to be careful about not putting people back in harm's way, but also be sensitive about the fact that people want to return to their homes, and there is a shortage of housing here in the region.

Mr. BYRNE. We certainly recognize that. In fact, a program that you and Mr. Zarrilli pointed out, the Rapid Repair Program, is an example where we recognized that. We came into the city. We had our toolbox of ways that we dealt with transitional housing, and it just didn't work here. We had to come up with something innovative. We certainly pushed the edges of our authority to do so, and we are really proud of working with the city and the State that that was a success. We have to do something similar here with these issues.

The important thing about our programs when they are related to that type of hazard mitigation program is they are locally-driven. New York is really a grouping of neighborhoods, and each neighborhood has got to get involved in what the right solution for them will be, and that is how our programs are designed, that the local community gets a say, the State gets a say, and then we try to find the solution together.

Mr. DONOVAN. I understand that, aside from elevation, there are measures that a community can take to protect not just an individual home but a community as a whole that would, first of all, reduce the risk of flood in those homes, and second allow those folks to see a reduction in their insurance. I think what our residents need is some guidance on what are those measures a community could take, and we look forward to hearing from you, not today but in the future. I have written to the administrators of both of your agencies asking for some guidance on what our residents can do to mitigate when it is impossible to elevate their home.

My time is running out. I just wanted to ask my friend Dan Zarrilli—Dan, I know there were some difficulties coordinating grants. I know a lot of our residents were misinformed or not informed particularly with taking out SBA loans and then later on finding out that they were ineligible for other relief because they had taken out a loan. When they asked can we pay the loan back and get the grant relief, they were told no, since you took the SBA loan. That was, I think, the fault of all of us for not informing people who were trying to do the right thing and be responsible, taking out loans to start the repair work, that if they hadn't taken that loan out they would have been eligible for money that they wouldn't have had to pay back.

So I don't know if through your experience, in all the projects you have worked on, when you found that information being passed down from various Federal agencies makes it more difficult if information wasn't being passed down to you, if information was being passed down that was not coordinated with every agency that was involved, I just want to open that up to you.

Mr. ZARRILLI. Well, I think one thing that I was talking about the challenges, that those dollars that come, the CDBG dollars that come without the payback provisions were not authorized until 3 months after the storm. So the timing, I think, was the challenge, that people were out telling residents here are the different sources available to you. The other sources were not yet known, and so there was an information disconnect on how those programs could work together ultimately.

So I think in an ideal world we would know what the full Federal response would be at that moment and we could advise accordingly.

Mr. DONOVAN. Thank you.

My time has expired. I now recognize the gentleman from New Jersey, Mr. Payne.

Mr. PAYNE. OK. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I am just kind-of piggybacking on what the Chairman's questions were. Mr. Byrne and Ms. McFadden, that process for individuals applying for assistance after a disaster is fairly complicated. It is really a paperwork nightmare, chock-full of different eligibility criteria and document requirements and often requires trips to various offices.

What efforts are underway to simplify this process for disaster survivors after this experience with Superstorm Sandy?

Mr. BYRNE. We recognize that, first of all, all these programs are designed to try to help, and that is our guiding light as we go into it. Early on in the disaster we tried to house all the organizations in the same place. Certainly we worked with the city. The city set up some locations, and we set up what we called Disaster Recovery Centers, where we will bring everybody together to try to make the process easier.

We do have, each of our agencies, responsibility to have internal controls, and to the extent that we can make those similar to make it easier, we are committed to doing so. One of the ways we do it, because one of the things that makes this a bit of a challenge is the privacy restrictions on people's personal information, we do have ways that, especially when it comes to working with non-prof-

its, that we have what we call Routine Use Agreements, where our lawyers get together and they work out where we can share this information and that the people are OK with us sharing this information.

But there is certainly more work we could do. We are committed to doing that. We recognize that speed to target, speed to assistance is one of the greatest impacts of having a faster recovery, and we are committed to do what it takes to do that.

Mr. PAYNE. Yes, because you would think in a disaster such as this, flooding or a hurricane, that there is accessibility to some of the documentation that you are going to require was probably lost in the disaster. So it kind-of exacerbates the expediting of this help.

Ms. McFadden.

Ms. MCFADDEN. At HUD, our program money goes to the States and local governments who set up their own programs. One of the challenges we hear is the amount of time it takes them to set up those programs. So we have invested in a toolkit that includes sample documents for them to set up, including applications for assistance for individuals. We also have been encouraging greater outreach from the beginning of the disaster. We certainly learned lessons in New Jersey about the importance of getting to particularly low- and moderate-income communities and people of limited English proficiency. So we are working more closely to ensure that those recommendations are made to grantees right at the front end.

Mr. PAYNE. My next question kind-of piggybacks on that. With the funding going to the State and local governments, many have called into question New Jersey's ability to effectively carry out disaster recovery programs following Superstorm Sandy. In light of allegations that the Christie administration played politics with the disaster relief money and dragged their feet on distributing funds to those who needed it most, how does FEMA and HUD oversee administration of State and Federal disaster funds and ensure that the investments are not politically motivated? How can you help ensure that the funds are spent efficiently and go to where they are needed?

Mr. BYRNE. Representative Payne, all of our programs have rigid guidelines of criteria for eligibility and for what types of things they can be spent on. There has to be loss when it comes to some of the areas that are impacted. Probably the program that we have that has the most flexibility for the State and local governments is the Hazard Mitigation Program where a portion, 25 cents on the dollar, is put into a pool and the State can have a look State-wide as to what their major risks are. That is not to say that there aren't still requirements, that there aren't still things that have to be looked at, there aren't still criteria that we evaluate regularly and routinely to make sure that we are getting the best bang for the buck.

Ms. MCFADDEN. The design of the CDBG program puts the controls in the State's hands to design the program, and once that program is designed and set up, HUD is monitoring it very closely, as well as our Office of Inspector General, to get on the ground to make sure that those funds are being done. We meet with the

State at least quarterly, either for a monitoring visit or for a technical assistance visit, and more frequently than that have conversations with them to check on updates. We also talk with community groups to get their input to see how things are going.

Mr. PAYNE. I would hope that there could be a mechanism that determines, based on past experience and criteria, that the State is moving, that you see efforts for them moving forward, as opposed to not dragging their feet with these funds. You would know best whether they are trying to work in a timely manner or not, and then suggest to them that they move forward in a more expeditious manner. So hopefully that can be something that is incorporated into the milestones that they need to meet.

With that, Chairman, I will yield back.

Mr. DONOVAN. I thank the witnesses for their valuable testimony today. I thank you for sharing your expertise in the measures that we took before, during, and after Superstorm Sandy. I certainly appreciate your suggestions for what we should do in the future.

This panel is dismissed. I will ask the clerk to arrange the table for the next panel. Thank you.

[Pause.]

Mr. DONOVAN. I would like to welcome our second panel to today's hearing and thank them for their participation.

Mr. Vincent Ignizio serves as the chief executive officer of Catholic Charities of Staten Island, a position he has held since July 2015. Prior to joining Catholic Charities, Mr. Ignizio served as the minority leader of the New York City Council and as a New York State Assemblyman representing southern Staten Island.

Welcome, Mr. Ignizio.

Mr. IGNIZIO. Thank you, Chairman Donovan, esteemed Members of the subcommittee—oh, I'm sorry, pardon me. I am already rolling right into it.

[Laughter.]

Mr. DONOVAN. A very aggressive witness.

[Laughter.]

Mr. DONOVAN. Thank you.

Mr. Brad Gair currently serves as the vice president of emergency management and enterprise resilience at NYU Langone Medical Center. He previously served as the founding director of the Mayor's Office of Housing and Recovery Operations and was the local recovery manager in the aftermath of Hurricane Sandy. He also served as deputy commissioner of the New York City Office of Emergency Management and as Federal recovery officer for the World Trade Center after 9/11. Mr. Gair is testifying today as a private subject-matter expert. He is not representing any agency.

Ms. Donna Moravick serves as the executive director of Southside Hospital. She previously served as vice president of Cardiovascular Services for Northwell and director of the North Shore University Hospital and Long Island Jewish Medical Center Department of Cardiovascular and Thoracic Surgery.

Ms. Kelly Higgs serves as the disaster recovery and resiliency coordinator for the New Jersey Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster, a position she has held since October 2013. Prior to her current role, Ms. Higgs served for more than 20 years in non-profit management and consulting.

The witnesses' full written testimony will appear in the record. The Chair now recognizes Mr. Ignizio for 5 minutes.

STATEMENT OF VINCENT M. IGNIZIO, CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER, CATHOLIC CHARITIES OF STATEN ISLAND, STATEN ISLAND, NEW YORK

Mr. IGNIZIO. All right. Thank you, Congressman, for the second time. I beg your indulgence. I am having a vision issue, so if you see me squint or look funny, I am having a problem with my contacts, so bear that in mind. I will paraphrase some of my testimony, and my testimony is submitted for the record, Mr. Chairman.

I believe I have the unique position of being in the non-profit sector after having been an elected official during Sandy over 3½ years ago. I can't believe it has been that long, and yet it feels like yesterday.

I am grateful for the invitation to speak before you, Mr. Chairman, as I have before the U.S. Senate on recovery. As the representative for the South Shore, I first-hand saw what worked, saw what didn't work, and what needs improvement out here on Staten Island.

During the evening of the storm, I found myself, as Staten Island quite often does, alone, because what happens is they shut the bridges down, and then Staten Island is on its own. The best efforts of the pre-deployed assets only worked so much depending on what was pre-deployed here. What we found is that there was not a sufficient amount of pre-deployed assets in the borough, and then when they shut the bridges down because of the winds, because of the rain, Staten Island is really on its own.

This is not a criticism. It is just a fact of life of being on an island.

Borough president and then-New York City Councilman and I found ourselves on Facebook trying to assist the police and fire department about where people were stuck in their homes. 9-1-1 either was not working or was overburdened, causing an issue for the police department to try to find and assist people.

The surge was what was the greatest impact here on Staten Island, as you know, Mr. Chairman, and a countless amount of homes were damaged. The morning after, eerily quiet. With much of the power on Staten Island out, the internet, phones and smartphones were inoperable. Even as an elected official, I couldn't communicate the plight of my constituents with City Hall, as there were no ways to communicate with them. I actually found a way at the end of Arden Avenue to finally reach a cell tower in your home State, Mr. Payne, of New Jersey. We actually picked up a signal from Keansburg. I wonder to today why our cell system was out and some duplicative systems that need to be in place to ensure that emergency communication would occur in those situations.

Emergency shelters were soon swamped with donations and neighbors trying to help each other. It actually became a burden to the shelter system itself, and Catholic Charities really became the assistance in that. They agreed to set up a distribution center which would help provide assistance to the citizens in supplies, everything from water, which subsequently became sheetrock, which

subsequently became helping rebuilding their homes. It is appropriate to note that New York City has a hazy remembrance of this scenario in that we have been working very hard with the city administration to try to receive some sort of reimbursement for the time that our facility was utilized with the massive amount of trucks and the infrastructure cost that we absorbed. We are working with them. We hope to have a solution in short order.

Since Hurricane Sandy dealt a blow to our community, we have all been working together for a better Staten Island response, non-profit organizations overall. We at Catholic Charities became the distribution center to the South Shore to build a rapid repair center, as well as the case management center for people in need. Our board chairman, Jerry McEnerney, Monsignor Sullivan, who leads all of Catholic Charities for the New York Archdiocese, played a vital role in ensuring this partnership would serve the community needs first and foremost.

We knew we needed to act expeditiously, and that is the real lesson that we learned. The first people on the ground, Mr. Chairman and Congressman, were the non-profit organizations. They go out—your churches, your local churches, your faith-based organizations, they go out and they help people first while Government has to work through the processes that are mandated by the system.

What we are doing now is we have learned to plan, to pre-deploy even in the communities in the non-profit organizations. Toward that end, we have partnered with Guyon Rescue, a local organization that helps communities and families after Sandy house a trailer on our campus, which would be stocked with needs, God forbid, of a future emergency that would allow for a quick and rapid deployment.

Staten Island organizations as a whole have been working together to better understand the resources we each have and how we can use them more efficiently. Non-profit organizations like the Jewish Community Center, Project Hospitality, and local churches have been working on emergency preparedness planning individually in their own group, and then as a group, on how we can all work together.

Working together with government on all levels will ensure that we learn the lessons from the past while making us ready for the future, God forbid a storm comes our way. With just 1 year of this job under my belt, I can say that non-profit organizations are working very hard. Having this committee meeting on Staten Island is a strong statement, Mr. Chairman, and I commend you for doing so.

So much has changed on Staten Island, but Staten Island has really come out stronger than it was before. We still have much to learn and hope your commitment and great staff can assist us in making sure that we are better prepared.

In closing, I wanted to thank the great corporate partners that we had during Sandy to assist us as well, everything from Tyson Chicken to Walmart to faith-based organizations from across the country. There are too many to name, but they were here and they were assisting us when we needed it most. The massive allocation of Federal funds was and is appreciated. We have made and will continue to make Staten Island stronger and more resilient than

it was prior to the storm. We only hope that the larger projects still in the planning stages will come sooner than later and, God forbid, a storm hits again.

We at Catholic Charities of Staten Island fully intend on being part of the solution and welcome any questions and feedback you have for us.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Ignizio follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF VINCENT M. IGNIZIO

JULY 11, 2016

Chairman Donovan, esteemed Members of the Subcommittee on Emergency Preparedness, Response, and Communications, my name is Vincent Ignizio and I am currently the CEO of Catholic Charities of Staten Island. I have the unique position of being in the non-profit sector now having been an elected official when Sandy struck our shores over 3 years ago. I am grateful for the invitation to speak today as I previously have before the United States Senate on Sandy Recovery matters as well.

As the NYC Council representative for the south shore of Staten Island, I saw first-hand what worked, what didn't work, and what needs to be improved god forbid another storm comes our way.

During the evening of the storm Staten Island found itself as it quite often does—alone. Despite the best hopes of pre-deployed city and State assets, when a major storm is at its height our bridges close, the ferry stops running, and Staten Island is virtually on its own.

Let me be clear, this is not a criticism, it is the fact of being an island when a serious storm comes our way. What made matters worse that infamous night is that the 9-1-1 system was either inoperable, congested, or both.

Borough President Oddo, then a NYC Councilman like myself was using Facebook throughout the night to help police and fire officials find those in need and/or trapped in their homes. What made matters worse is that Hurricane Irene came and went without the damage predicted. This led people into a false sense of security that sadly cost some their lives.

The surge is what was the greatest impact on Staten Island and with more than 2 dozen deaths and countless amounts of homes damaged, the morning after was eerily quiet.

With much of the power out on Staten Island, cell towers, internet, phones, and smartphones were inoperable. As an elected official I could not communicate the plight of my constituents to City Hall in that we had no access to any communication devices that would work.

Gasoline was difficult to come by in that most pumps utilize electricity to operate as well.

I myself went out to the end of Arden Avenue to try to get a signal on my cell phone from NJ—which I was fortunately able to do. I ask to this day, why did the towers in Keansburg work and not ours?

Emergency shelters were soon swamped with donations and neighbors trying to help each other. This actually became a burden to the shelter system and the city reached out to Catholic Charities to ease the burden. They agreed to set up a distribution center which would help provide assistance to citizens in need of supplies from water to sheet rock and everything in between.

It is appropriate at this point to advise the committee that NYC has a hazy memory as of late when it comes to this point and we have been unable to secure any reimbursement funding for the time our buildings were off line due to the city's requested need. We as a local non-profit were happy to help and yet disappointed at the current administration which has refused to offset the costs we incurred and damage to our physical plant while assisting.

Since Hurricane Sandy dealt its blow to the community we have all been working hard to strengthen Staten Island's response. Sadly the storm itself allowed us to look at what would be needed as institutions and individuals alike.

We at Catholic Charities became the distribution center for the south shore, the build-it-back center, the rapid repair center, as well as the case-management site for those seeking assistance in our area. Our Board Chairman Gerard McEnerney and Monsignor Sullivan, who leads all of Catholic Charities in the New York Archdiocese, played the vital role in ensuring the partnership was one that served the community and its needs first and foremost. We knew we needed to act as expedi-

tiously as possible as the need for assistance grew with every hour after the storm hit.

We learned the vital and rapid role NPOs play in the community when governments are just beginning to ramp up responses or unable to address one's specific needs in short order.

In fact we have learned that having a plan to pre-deploy supplies in case of emergencies is beneficial to both Government and the NPO alike in case of a future disaster.

Towards that end we have partnered with Guyon Rescue a local organization that helped countless families after Sandy store a trailer on our campus that will be stocked with emergency supplies. This will allow for rapid deployment should the need arise.

Staten Island organizations have been working together to better understand the resources we have and how we can use them more efficiently. NPOs like the Jewish Community Center, Project Hospitality, and local churches have been working on emergency preparedness and planning individually and as a group.

Working together with Government on all levels will ensure we learned the lessons from the past while making us ready for the future—one that we hope will never come.

With just 1 year on the job this coming week I can say that we in the NPO world recognize the need and vital role we play in helping our neighbors when emergencies strike. Having the committee on Staten Island is a strong statement and I want to thank you Mr. Chairman for your relentless efforts in making this hearing happen and ensuring we are prepared and receiving our fair share.

So much has changed and yet Staten Island has come out of all this stronger than before. We still have much to learn and hope your committee and great staff can assist us in making sure we are in fact better prepared.

In closing I want to thank all the great corporate partners that came to assist as well. From Tyson chicken to Walmart to faith-based organizations from across the country. There are too many to count and mention here today. Staten Island was fortunate to have such support and kindness from its neighbors from across this great nation.

The massive allocation of Federal funds was/is appreciated as well. We have made and will continue to make Staten Island stronger and more resilient. We only hope the larger projects still in the planning stages come sooner than later and before we get hit again.

We at Catholic Charities of Staten Island fully intend on being a part of the solution and welcome any feedback or questions that I have the ability to field.

Mr. DONOVAN. Thank you, Mr. Ignizio.

Mr. Gair.

STATEMENT OF BRAD GAIR, PRIVATE CITIZEN

Mr. GAIR. Good morning, Mr. Chairman, Representative Payne. My name is Brad Gair. I am currently vice president of emergency management and enterprise resilience at NYU Langone Medical Center. After Hurricane Sandy, I was the director of Housing Recovery Operations in the Mayor's Office, and also coordinated the city's multi-billion-dollar FEMA recovery program. Previously I served as deputy commissioner with the New York City Office of Emergency Management and as a FEMA Federal coordinating officer, during which time I worked on numerous large-scale disasters, including serving as the Federal Recovery Officer in New York City after 9/11 and in Louisiana after Hurricane Katrina.

I am grateful for this opportunity to address the subcommittee today. Based upon more than 2 decades of experience in the business of disaster recovery and resilience, I offer the following four points for your consideration.

No. 1. We need a National dialog to agree upon recovery values. As citizens of a caring Nation, we have a natural inclination to want to help and assist our neighbors after the devastating losses that accompany large-scale disasters. Unfortunately, we have yet to

agree at the National level upon how much we should do to aid disaster survivors. As a result, we have created a series of programs that, in the end, serve neither the taxpayers nor those families who may have lost everything. Every time a major disaster occurs in this country, the same unanswered questions plague recovery efforts: How much help is fair and reasonable? Should the taxpayers across the Nation share this burden? Who is responsible for getting families back into their homes? Why not require insurance? How much should we invest in making communities more disaster-resilient, and are there areas where we should not build back at all? The answers to these questions and many similar ones depend upon whom you ask.

FEMA's mantra is: "We are not here to make you whole." Does that represent the collective wisdom of our Federal agencies and our Nation's lawmakers, or is it simply a rationale for inadequate programs that have filled a vacuum created by a lack of consensus, unclear guidance, and muddled authorities? Until we agree upon the basic parameters of post-disaster assistance grounded in consideration of these types of issues, even the best-conceived programs would fail to meet the expectations of the Government, the disaster survivors, and the American people.

No. 2. Existing recovery programs and resilience programs are poorly structured and badly implemented. The Federal Government often speaks of the sequence of delivery and disaster assistance as if there is a coherent plan behind it all when in reality it is a series of patchwork programs that, more than anything else, confuse, frustrate, and demoralize both those in need of aid and those trying to provide it. Our existing recovery programs do not work for the majority of families impacted by disasters, not individually and not collectively.

The National Flood Insurance Program is broken, possibly beyond repair. FEMA's cap on assistance to families at barely \$30,000 makes little economic sense. Asking families to take on new debt through Small Business Administration loans is always a hard sell to those who have already lost so much. Charitable organizations trying to fill the gap without sufficient data on the needs and very little coordination with Government agencies end up wasting millions of donated dollars, and the HUD CBDG program, when authorized, is expected to be the magic bullet, and instead ends up being just another self-inflicted wound for the Federal Government.

From the Road Home program in post-Hurricane Katrina Louisiana, to Build-It-Back in post-Sandy New York City, HUD CBDG programs have generally been categorical failures in supporting timely and effective housing recovery. Once Congress authorizes the funds, the process for getting these funds from the Federal Treasury to those in need is unacceptably long, inexplicably convoluted, and inexcusably wasteful. It would be very easy to simply blame bumbling bureaucrats and greedy contractors, and no doubt we must all do better. But the root of the problem is that no State and no local government, regardless of its capability, can successfully create and set up in a few months what amounts to a multi-billion-dollar corporation with hundreds of employees and contractors, numerous store-front locations, a broad-based marketing cam-

paign, and integrated customer service operations while tens of thousands of desperate customers must anxiously wait for help as their hope dwindles.

HUD touts the flexibility of the CDBG-DR, which does indeed give communities considerable latitude in program design, but I would trade much of this flexibility for a pre-approved, off-the-shelf program, complete with reasonable environmental waivers, a unified damage inspection process, unrestricted data sharing across the Government to minimize the paperwork burden on our customers, and a proven electronic case management system that could be quickly and efficiently operationalized. A properly-designed recovery program would be integrated with all other Federal programs to avoid the twin obstacles of excessive bureaucracy and unavoidable duplications of benefits that currently lead to extensive delays and universally bad results.

No. 3. Post-disaster coordination across the Federal agencies is insufficient. In the 10-block stretch along the East River in Manhattan in the area known as Hospital Row, FEMA, HUD, and the VA have individually funded hundreds of millions of dollars of resilience improvements without making any attempt whatsoever to coordinate these critical infrastructure projects at NYU Langone Medical Center, Bellevue Hospital, the VA Hospital and the Rebuild By Design East Coast Resiliency Project, formerly known as the Big U.

Similarly, right here on Staten Island, one Federal agency's funds are being used to buy out homes and convert the land to open space due to the extreme long-term flooding risk, while another Federal agency is designing a seawall that will ultimately provide substantially increased flood protection for this exact same property.

I am not saying that anything has been done wrong in these cases or any other countless similar cases, and at NYU Langone we are extremely grateful for the Federal assistance. The point is that maybe with better coordination, we could have done even more right. As a result, the Federal Government continues to miss opportunities to enhance flood protection, maximize the use of tax dollars, and ensure that investments in resilience are properly integrated.

The challenge is that no single Federal agency has the appropriate authority to directly coordinate these recovery programs in the way that FEMA does during the disaster response process. The second version of the National Disaster Recovery Framework was just issued last month and still does not include any formal mechanisms empowering FEMA or any other Federal agency to oversee and manage across the Federal recovery programs. Until this occurs, each agency will continue to work in isolation, and hundreds of millions of dollars in missed opportunities to leverage Federal funding will continue to accrue.

Fourth and last. We need a comprehensive National resilience strategy. FEMA has 4 different hazard mitigation programs and has devoted billions of dollars to resilience post-Hurricane Sandy. HUD does encourage resilience in its CDBG programs by State and local governments, and separately dedicated \$1 billion to the Rebuild By Design resilience competition. The Federal Transit Ad-

ministration awarded \$3 billion of resilience grants to local and State governments, and Army Corps of Engineers received authorization for \$4 billion of Hurricane Sandy-related projects.

While this commitment to resilience is commendable, each agency is left to establish its own ideas of what resilience means and how best to achieve it. As a result, there is no coherent overarching National resilience strategy in place to guide our investments.

In the months after Hurricane Sandy, New York City devoted significant time and resources to devising the Special Initiative for Rebuilding and Resiliency to guide recovery based upon locally-derived resilience values. In a completely separate initiative at the Federal level, 23 agencies comprising the Hurricane Sandy Rebuilding Task Force developed a Hurricane Sandy Rebuilding Strategy, including 69 recommendations, many of which were focused on resilience but few of which have been implemented. These initiatives are a good start, but a few months of hard work in the immediate aftermath of a single major hurricane should not be expected to set long-term National policy.

We need the Federal Government, in cooperation with State, Tribal, and local governments, and the private sector, to develop a comprehensive National resilience strategy, establishing clear and measurable resilience objectives, and taking into account the latest scientific evidence, the values that communities hold dear, and everything in between. Furthermore, this Federally-driven resilience strategy must include an implementation plan and be tied directly to Federal funding assistance, or else it will be summarily ignored.

We are all here today for the exact same reason that many similar Congressional committees and subcommittees have been convened in the aftermath of virtually every major disaster over the past several decades: The system is broken, everyone is mad, and billions of dollars continue to be wasted. The Post-Hurricane Katrina Reform Act reformed next to nothing, and the Hurricane Sandy Improvement Act improved far too little. Now let's try something different. Let's start over, decide who and how much we want to help, establish a comprehensive policy for disaster resilience and recovery, devise an implementation strategy, build an integrated set of programs that get the job done, and empower our hard-working public servants to lead genuine, sustainable, cost-effective efforts that restore communities and support families in their time of need.

Thank you very much, and I would be happy to answer any questions.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Gair follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF BRAD GAIR

JULY 11, 2016

Good morning. My name is Brad Gair. I am currently vice-president of emergency management & enterprise resilience at NYU Langone Medical Center. After Hurricane Sandy, I was director of housing recovery operations in the Mayor's Office and also coordinated the city's multi-billion dollar FEMA recovery program. Previously, I have served as deputy commissioner with the New York City Office of Emergency Management and as a FEMA Federal coordinating officer, during which time I worked on numerous large-scale disasters, including serving as Federal recovery officer in New York City after 9/11 and in Louisiana after Hurricane Katrina.

I am grateful for this opportunity to address the subcommittee today. Based upon more than 2 decades of experience in the business of disaster recovery and resilience, I offer the following 4 points for your consideration:

WE NEED A NATIONAL DIALOGUE TO AGREE UPON RECOVERY VALUES.

As citizens of a caring Nation, we have a natural inclination to want to assist our neighbors after the devastating losses that accompany large-scale disasters. Unfortunately, we have yet to agree at the National level upon how much we should do to aid disaster survivors. As a result, we have created a set of programs that in the end serve neither the taxpayers nor those families who may have lost everything.

Every time a major disaster occurs in this country, the same unanswered questions plague recovery efforts. “How much help is fair and reasonable?” “Should taxpayers across the Nation share this burden?” “Who is responsible for getting families back into their homes?” “Why not require insurance?” “How much should we invest in making communities more disaster-resilient?” “Are there areas where we should not build back at all?”

The answer to these questions and many similar ones depends upon whom you ask. FEMA’s mantra is “We are not here to make you whole.” Does that represent the collective wisdom of our Federal agencies and our Nation’s lawmakers, or is it simply a rationale for inadequate programs that have filled the vacuum created by a lack of consensus, unclear guidance, and muddled authorities?

Until we agree upon the basic parameters of post-disaster assistance grounded in full consideration of these types of issues, even the best-conceived programs would fail to meet the expectations of Government, the disaster survivors, and the American people.

EXISTING RECOVERY AND RESILIENCE PROGRAMS ARE POORLY STRUCTURED AND BADLY IMPLEMENTED.

The Federal Government often speaks of the sequence of delivery in disaster assistance as if there is a coherent plan behind it all, when in reality it is a series of patchwork programs that more than anything else confuse, frustrate, and demoralize both those in need of aid and those trying to provide it.

Our existing recovery programs do not work for the majority of families impacted by disasters, not individually and not collectively. The National Flood Insurance Program is broken, possibly beyond repair; FEMA’s cap on assistance to families at barely \$30,000 makes little economic sense; asking families to take on new debt through Small Business Administration loans is always a hard sell to those who have already lost so much; charitable organizations trying to fill gaps without sufficient data on the needs and little coordination with Government agencies end up wasting millions of donated dollars; and the HUD CDBG–DR program, when authorized, is expected to be the magic bullet and instead just ends up being another self-inflicted wound for the Federal Government.

From the Road Home program in post-Hurricane Katrina Louisiana to Build-it-Back in post-Hurricane Sandy New York City, HUD CDBG–DR programs have generally been categorical failures in supporting timely and effective housing recovery. Once Congress authorizes the funds, the process for getting funds from the Federal treasury to those in need is unacceptably long, inexplicably convoluted, and inexcusably wasteful. It would be easy to simply blame bumbling bureaucrats and greedy contractors—no doubt we must all do better—but the root of the problem is that no local or State government, regardless of its capability, can successfully create and set up in a few months what amounts to a multi-billion dollar corporation with hundreds of employees and contractors, numerous store-front locations, a broad-based marketing campaign, and integrated customer service operations while tens of thousands of desperate customers must wait anxiously for help as hope dwindles.

HUD touts the flexibility of CDBG–DR, which does indeed give communities considerable latitude in program design, but I would trade much of this flexibility for a pre-approved, off-the-shelf program, complete with reasonable environmental waivers, a unified damage inspection process, unrestricted data sharing across Government to minimize the paperwork burden on our customers, and a proven electronic case management system that could be quickly and efficiently operationalized. A properly-designed recovery program would be integrated with all other Federal programs to avoid the twin obstacles of excessive bureaucracy and unavoidable duplications of benefits that currently lead to extensive delays and universally bad results.

POST-DISASTER COORDINATION ACROSS THE FEDERAL AGENCIES IS INSUFFICIENT.

In the 10-block stretch along the East River in Manhattan in the area known as Hospital Row, FEMA, HUD, and VA have individually funded hundreds of millions of dollars of resilience improvements without making any attempt whatsoever to coordinate these critical infrastructure projects at NYU Langone Medical Center, Bellevue Hospital, the VA Hospital, and the Rebuild by Design East Side Coastal Resiliency Project (formerly known as the Big U).

Similarly, right here on Staten Island, one Federal agency's funds are being used to buy out homes and convert the land to open space due to the extreme long-term flooding risk, while another Federal agency is designing a seawall that will ultimately provide substantially increased flood protection for this exact same property.

I am not saying that anything has been done wrong in these or any other countless similar cases—and at NYU Langone, we are extremely thankful for the Federal assistance—the point is that maybe with better coordination, we could have done even more right. As a result, the Federal Government continues to miss opportunities to enhance flood protection, maximize the use of tax dollars and ensure that investments in resilience are properly integrated.

The challenge is that no single Federal agency has appropriate authority to directly coordinate these recovery programs in the way that FEMA does during disaster response. The second version of National Disaster Recovery Framework was just issued last month and still does not include any formal mechanisms empowering FEMA or any other agency to oversee and manage across the Federal recovery programs. Until this occurs, each agency will continue to work in isolation, and hundreds of millions of dollars in missed opportunities to leverage Federal funding will continue to accrue.

WE NEED COMPREHENSIVE NATIONAL RESILIENCE STRATEGY.

FEMA has 4 different hazard mitigation programs and has devoted billions of dollars to resilience post-Hurricane Sandy. HUD encourages resilience in its CDBG-DR programs by State and local governments, and separately dedicated \$1 billion to the Rebuild by Design resilience competition. The Federal Transit Administration awarded \$3 billion of resilience grants to local and State governments after Hurricane Sandy, and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers received authorization for \$4 billion of Hurricane Sandy-related resilience projects.

While this commitment to resilience is commendable, each agency is left to establish its own ideas of what resilience means and how best to achieve it. As a result, there is no coherent overarching National resilience strategy in place to guide our investments.

In the months after Hurricane Sandy, the city of New York devoted significant time and resources to devising the Special Initiative for Rebuilding & Resiliency (SIRR) report to guide recovery based upon locally-derived resilience values. In a completely separate initiative at the Federal level, 23 agencies comprising the Hurricane Sandy Rebuilding Task Force developed a Hurricane Sandy Rebuilding Strategy, including 69 recommendations, many of which are focused on resilience but few of which have been formally implemented. These initiatives are a good start, but a few months of hard work in the immediate aftermath of a single major hurricane cannot be expected to set long-term National policy.

We need the Federal Government, in cooperation with State, Tribal, and local governments and the private sector to develop a comprehensive National resilience strategy, establishing clear and measurable resilience objectives, and taking into account the latest scientific evidence, the values that communities hold dear and everything in between. Furthermore, this Federally-driven resilience strategy must include an implementation plan and be tied directly to all Federal funding assistance—or else it will be summarily ignored.

We are all here today for the exact same reason that many similar Congressional committees and subcommittees have been convened in the aftermath of virtually every major disaster over the past several decades—the system is broken, everyone is mad, and billions of dollars continue to be wasted. The Post-Katrina Reform Act reformed next to nothing; the Hurricane Sandy Recovery Improvement Act improved far too little. Now let's try something different. Let's start over, decide who and how much we want to help, establish a comprehensive policy for disaster resilience and recovery, devise an implementation strategy, build an integrated set of programs that get the job done, and empower our public servants to lead genuine, sustainable, cost-effective efforts that restore communities and support families in times of need.

Thank you very much, and I would be happy to answer any questions that you may have.

Mr. DONOVAN. Thank you, Mr. Gair.
The Chair recognizes Ms. Moravick for 5 minutes.

**STATEMENT OF DONNA MORAVICK, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR,
SOUTHSIDE HOSPITAL, BAY SHORE, NEW YORK**

Ms. MORAVICK. Hi. I want to thank you both for allowing me to be here today.

Southside Hospital is a 341-bed tertiary facility on the South Shore of Long Island in western Suffolk. We are a relatively new tertiary facility. We provide cardiac surgery care, cardiac care. We are a level-2 ACS, the American College of Surgeons, trauma center.

On October 29, as we all know, 2012, we were really securing our borders and our entire campus for Hurricane Sandy. But we didn't start on the 29. We started 3 days earlier.

I am actually a nurse and a nurse practitioner, and I believe in primary prevention as the treatment of choice, so we went into gear. We rallied the staff. We told them, bring your clothes, you are staying here for a good 2 to 3 days, and we are not leaving, even though they too may have had homes that would be destroyed during the hurricane. We went into action. We secured our core business. We have low-lying electric gear. We have our switch gear, and our generators are on the ground floor. We had purchased doors which I call the dam doors, but they are doors that dam the water out of that area. I am very visual, I have to see everything. So during the hurricane, we had administration there 24/7, all surgeons in-house, all cardiac surgeons, trauma, emergency room staff, and we were prepared for anything. We knew that if any other hospital in the community went down, we would have to be open.

Our emergency room is there for our patients. We serve a very diverse community, which is really extremely important, and we are about \$900 million of economic impact to our community.

So our doors were open, and we were not shutting them at any cost. We identified those high-acuity patients that were requiring intubation or being on a respirator, and we put them in ambulances and transported them to higher ground, a tertiary facility in our health system. We had constant calls every 4 hours, every 2 hours at times during the height of the storm. But as an executive director of a hospital, I never thought I would have to know high tide and moon phase, which hit simultaneously on the South Shore of Long Island.

We are within 1,000 feet of tributaries that empty into the Great South Bay, and it was very scary seeing the water rise up to the doors of the hospital, sandbags. We really had to put a lot of people outside during this event to be sure that we had pumps going and our generators were working.

Power was lost in the community, and what people do not recognize is the hospital is a safe haven for everyone. We had those worried well older patients, moms with their babies who had no light who would come into the hospital. We had a bar of oxygen across the emergency room with people breathing in our emergency room because they could and they needed to.

So it was really a difficult time. The roads were shut down at one point in time. But I believe we persevered. We were prepared. We

were ready to rumble. Whatever we could mitigate, we did at that time. We were backing up other institutions who were flooded and needed help. We were available for any other institution. We received calls from the Town of Islip, and we worked collaboratively with them.

But I do believe that hospitals are an integral part of our community, and we are there in times of need. Patients who are well, patients who are sick, we are the place to go. Our emergency room was jam-packed with people who just were scared and didn't want to be home in their homes.

So again, I think preparedness for hospitals is key, and we are the place where people will come during catastrophic events.

Thank you for letting me speak.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Moravick follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF DONNA MORAVICK

JULY 11, 2016

Southside Hospital (SSH) is a 341-bed tertiary hospital, located in south shore of western Suffolk County in Bay Shore, NY, and has been serving over 1.4 million residents. Southside Hospital has over 2,500 employees and has an economic impact of approximately \$900 million (Health Association of New York State). Southside Hospital is regionally recognized for its specialized services, including the American College Surgeons first verified trauma program in Long Island, cardiac surgery, neuroscience, and obstetrics & gynecology. In addition, SSH has a broad array of hospital-based ambulatory services. Moreover, Southside Hospital services a diverse community and is the safe haven for many, seeing over 71,000 emergency visits and having approximately 21,000 discharges per year.

Southside sits within 1,000 feet of 3 major tributaries that flow into the Great South Bay. Southside's proximity makes it extremely vulnerable to storms, tides, and heavy rainfall. On October, 29 2012, Southside Hospital faced one of the worst storms of the century called Superstorm Sandy, which produced an even higher level of challenge given its landfall during a high tide cycle and corresponding full moon.

The hospital immediately acted to protect its core hospital infrastructure assets including electrical switchgear, its generators, as well as telephone and IT rooms. On the eve of the storm, extraordinary efforts and costs were incurred to mitigate the high risk of this storm. At a great expense, the hospital implemented protective measures such as bringing in pumpers and installing storm doors to dam the water and protect the electrical gear. Fortunately, water levels rose but halted before they breached these protective measures. As a result, Southside was one of the only health care facilities in the Southwestern portion of Suffolk County that remained opened and continued to provide care to our patients and the community we serve.

At all times, hospital staff performed heroically and was able to treat patients during and after the storm. Critical patients were identified and transferred to one of the other tertiary hospitals in the Northwell Health system. The hospital also became a safe haven for those who needed shelter, especially those dependent on electrically-powered devices in their homes.

Fortunately, through significant efforts, the hospital was able to weather the storm successfully despite record water levels. If the protective measures were breached, not only would Southside's main infrastructure be impacted long-term but its patient and the communities we serve would have been compromised.

Subsequent to the storm, the hospital has taken many actions including infrastructure improvements and continual emergency management training to lessen the impact of future storms. Nevertheless, a continued investment in storm mitigation infrastructure protections is still required.

Post-storm, Southside, at its own expense, began to invest in necessary remediation infrastructure protections. During the past 4 years, the hospital has spent approximately \$6 million dollars in these capital improvements.

With the recently-awarded FEMA grant funds, Southside is now able to elevate critical equipment to secure elevated locations. Additionally, with the help of the grant, the hospital will be hardening the building envelope including windows, roofing, and other points of access.

Finally, in addition to assessing new preventive infrastructure improvements, we continue to train all staff on emergency management and regularly explore best practices to protect against a future storm event. We thank you for allowing us to tell our story.

Mr. DONOVAN. Thank you.

The Chair recognizes Ms. Higgs for 5 minutes.

STATEMENT OF KELLY D. HIGGS, DISASTER RECOVERY AND RESILIENCY COORDINATOR, NEW JERSEY VOLUNTARY ORGANIZATIONS ACTIVE IN DISASTER

Ms. HIGGS. Thank you very much, Chairman Donovan and Ranking Member Payne, for convening this hearing on the importance of preparedness and resiliency and inviting me to testify on this critical topic.

New Jersey Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster, or NJVOAD's mission is to bring together New Jersey organizations in disaster response and recovery in order to offer more effective services to people and communities affected by disaster. Our success derives from strong relationships built on the foundation of the four C's, which are cooperation, communication, coordination, and collaboration.

It is my belief that these same foundational building blocks have contributed to many successful partnerships, projects, and outcomes in the aftermath of Sandy. Conversely, when these key ingredients were not present, programs struggled and/or failed.

There have been many lessons learned throughout Sandy recovery, but my testimony today will focus on 4 areas.

First, the need to build partnerships and relationships at the local, county, and regional level before disaster strikes.

Second, the need for early education and outreach to impacted households.

Third, the importance of building partnerships with the philanthropic community and advocating for funding allocation decisions which sustain true long-term recovery efforts.

Fourth, the need for coordination and continuity in the development and implementation of State-managed programs utilizing community development and social service block grant funds.

With the support of the Corporation for National Community Service, grants utilized VISTAs, or Volunteers in Service to America, to build capacity. NJVOAD has been able to establish a VOAD presence in every county in New Jersey, and this is pretty remarkable because there were only 6 in place before Sandy struck. We saw the benefit of this in Bergen County, where the VOAD had a strong network of area non-profits and a solid relationship with the Office of Emergency Management prior to Sandy. As a result, they were able to quickly mobilize non-profit resources for response and recovery efforts in impacted communities.

Sadly, Hudson County, Essex County, and Union, and many of the most impacted counties to the south of Bergen, did not have a VOAD in place prior to Sandy, and as a result they needed a tremendous amount of support in identifying partners and resources, which delayed the speed and efficiency of service delivery to impacted individuals.

NJVOAD worked in these and all 21 counties throughout the State to identify non-profit and governmental partners to join the VOAD to coordinate outreach events, to identify leadership to ensure regular meetings and training, and to organize individual structures that meet the unique needs of each of these communities.

Other States are looking at NJVOAD's program as a model for resiliency, and we are working with our Corporation for National Community Service and our FEMA Region 2 partners to replicate these efforts through a regional pilot program.

Almost 4 years post-Sandy, the need for recovery support far outweighs the remaining non-profit resources. The remaining cases consist primarily of low-income households with limited means for recovery, or moderate-income households that encountered several challenges navigating the complicated recovery road. Many of these households began recovery work before documenting the damage, and they have not been able to provide sufficient proof of that damage to receive the funds they should be entitled to through the National Flood Insurance Program. Others signed contracts they could not afford or hired disreputable contractors to complete recovery work.

NJVOAD is developing educational resources to be utilized in future disasters so that impacted homeowners can make informed decisions before beginning their recovery.

NJVOAD is also working closely with the philanthropic community to identify collaborative solutions which will provide for a more effective and sustainable funding stream for future disasters. Education extending to our Government partners and the public is critical to ensure better understanding of the need for funding to sustain recovery efforts long term.

The majority of money is donated in the days and weeks following a major disaster, with the expectation and sometimes the mandate that these funds get out immediately, but that is not when donated dollars are most needed. NJVOAD hopes to establish a State-wide advisory group with representatives from the philanthropic, Government, and non-profit communities to provide guidance and expertise specific to the disaster at hand.

The struggle to navigate the State recovery programs remains one of the biggest challenges faced by New Jersey Sandy survivors and non-profit organizations. For instance, RREM, which is New Jersey's Rebuild program, was developed without consideration of funding for rental assistance, which can and should be covered by block grants. Millions of non-profit donated dollars were expended on rental assistance so that Sandy survivors could maintain mortgages on uninhabitable homes. Attempts to advocate with State and Federal agencies to address this and other deficiencies were not productive, as each held the other accountable for roadblocks to progress.

NJVOAD has forged relationships with the New Jersey Division of Consumer Affairs, and we have seen small concessions, but much improvement is needed in how these programs are designed and integrated into the overall disaster recovery framework. A stronger citizen action plan should be mandated which requires input and involvement by disaster survivors and recovery entities

during the formation of any proposed disaster recovery action plan. Additionally, better integration and staffing of the joint field offices to include State decision makers responsible for the development and implementation of recovery programs could go a long way in future coordination and integration of Governmental programs.

NJVOAD is committed to working with our public- and private-sector partners to be part of the solution in implementing lessons learned from Sandy and preparing our communities to weather whatever storms might lie ahead.

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify, and I look forward to answering any questions.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Higgs follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF KELLY D. HIGGS

JULY 11, 2016

My name is Kelly Higgs, and I am honored to serve as the Disaster Recovery and Resiliency Coordinator for New Jersey Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster (NJVOAD). I was hired post-Sandy to provide support for long-term recovery in impacted communities throughout NJ, while also building resiliency and preparedness efforts in all 21 counties throughout the State. I am thrilled that the House Committee of Homeland Security's Subcommittee on Emergency Preparedness, Response, and Communications has convened a hearing around the importance of preparedness and resiliency, and I am honored to be invited to testify on this critical topic.

NJVOAD's mission is to bring together New Jersey organizations active in disaster assistance, and to foster cooperation and coordination in preparedness, response, and recovery in order to offer more effective services to people and communities affected by disaster. Our success is built upon strong relationships with non-profit, and Government partners which are built on the foundation of the "Four C's": Cooperation, communication, coordination, and collaboration. It is my belief and testimony that these same foundational building blocks have contributed to many successful partnerships, projects, and outcomes in the aftermath of Sandy. Conversely, when these key ingredients were not present, programs struggled and or failed.

LESSONS LEARNED

There have been many lessons learned throughout Sandy recovery, but NJVOAD has prioritized these five:

1. The need to build partnerships and relationships at the local, county, and regional level BEFORE disaster strikes;
2. The importance of a coordinated effort to broadcast and organize the needs for donated goods and volunteer support;
3. The need for early education and outreach to impacted households;
4. The importance of building partnerships with the philanthropic community and advocating for funding allocation decisions which sustain true long-term recovery efforts;
5. The need for coordination and continuity in the development and implementation of State-managed programs utilizing Community Development and Social Services Block Grant funds.

One of the very early lessons learned was the need to build partnerships and relationships at the local, county, and regional level BEFORE disaster strikes. NJVOAD saw the benefits of this in areas like Bergen County, where the Bergen VOAD had a strong membership of area non-profits and a solid relationship with the Office of Emergency Management (OEM) prior to Sandy. They were able to quickly mobilize non-profit resources for response and recovery efforts in Moonachie, Little Ferry, and other impacted communities. Sadly, Hudson, Essex, and Union Counties, 3 of the 9 most impacted counties just to the south of Bergen, did not have a VOAD in place prior to Sandy. These and other communities without a VOAD needed a tremendous amount of support in identifying partners, finding resources, building relationships and gaining trust, which delayed the speed and efficiency of resource and service delivery to impacted individuals.

Another significant challenge New Jersey encountered was the lack of a coordinated effort to broadcast and organize the needs for donated goods and volunteer support. So many organizations found themselves overwhelmed with clothing or

canned goods that were dropped on their doorstep immediately following Sandy's arrival. Time and money was spent sorting, storing, distributing, and disposing of these unsolicited donations while communities lacked many other items which were needed to support response and recovery efforts, such as construction materials, protective masks, etc.

When Sandy struck, there was no centralized platform for volunteers to receive direction about how to help, or for communities and groups in need of volunteer labor to identify and coordinate volunteer efforts. Many volunteers appeared spontaneously in communities which were not equipped to deploy them, while other communities were longing for additional support but did not have the means to reach people to organize efforts. More than 18,000 calls and texts were received on the cell phone of the executive director of the NJ Governor's Office of Volunteerism in the days immediately following the storm, but there was no established mechanism in place to connect this desire to help with the needs in affected communities.

Almost 4 years post-Sandy, the need for support far outweighs the non-profit resources which remain in place to meet that need. This is not due to lack of desire on the part of non-profits, but to lack of funding. There are a limited number of Disaster Case Managers and non-profit builders who are continuing to work with some of the most challenging Sandy-recovery cases. These cases consist primarily of people who fall into two categories: Low-income households with limited means for recovery and moderate-income households that encountered several challenges navigating the complicated road to recovery. Many of these households began recovery work in their home before documenting the damage, and they have not been able to provide sufficient proof of damage to receive the funds they should be entitled to receive through the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP). Others signed contracts they could not afford or hired disreputable contractors to complete recovery work. There are many lessons we have learned from working alongside these individuals, but the two primary lessons are: The need for early education and outreach to impacted households and the importance of building partnerships with the philanthropic community and advocating for funding allocation decisions which sustain true long-term recovery efforts in the wake of a major disaster such as Sandy.

One of the biggest challenges faced by NJ Sandy survivors and non-profit organizations supporting recovery work has been the lack of coordination and continuity in the development and implementation of State-managed programs utilizing Community Development Block Grant—Disaster Recovery (CDBG—DR) and Social Services Block Grant (SSBG) funds. For instance, NJ's rebuild program, Rehabilitation, Reconstruction, Elevation, and Mitigation Program (RREM) was developed without consideration of funding for rental assistance. Rental assistance has been provided through other Federal and State programs, but the coordination and timing of these programs left significant gaps:

- FEMA's Individual and Households (IHP) program provided up to 18 months of rental assistance (or until the maximum grant amount was awarded), which carried most households through the late winter/early spring of 2014.
- NJ's Sandy Homeowner/Renter Assistance Program (SHRAP) launched in November 2013 and covered a maximum of 6 months of rental assistance (or coverage for other necessities such as utility payments, furniture, or household appliances) to a maximum of \$15,000. This money was first-come, first-served, so many individuals receiving IHP rental assistance applied for SHRAP concurrently and utilized SHRAP funds to cover other expenses to avoid duplication of benefits. Most people had exhausted their SHRAP award or had received the maximum 6 months of service by summer—early fall of 2014.
- There was no Governmental program in place to cover rental assistance until the Tenant-Based Rental Assistance (TBRA) program was introduced in March 2015 with first rental payments being disbursed in May 2015. This 12-month program was extended to cover a maximum of 24 months.

Non-profit funding is supposed to be the dollar of last resort to address unmet needs. However, the above time line left many displaced homeowners turning to the non-profit community to cover their rent for periods of 6–9 months. Millions of non-profit donated dollars were expended on rental assistance, so that Sandy survivors could maintain mortgages on their uninhabitable homes. Attempts to advocate with State and Federal agencies to address this and other deficiencies were not productive as each held the other accountable for any roadblocks to progress.

RESOLUTION EFFORTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

NJVOAD members have worked closely with existing partners such as the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), the New Jersey Office of Emergency Management (NJOEM), the NJ Department of Human Services (NJDHS), and the

Governor's Office of Volunteerism to create and implement collaborative solutions to these lessons learned. We have also developed new partnerships with the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS), the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, the Council of NJ Grantmakers, and many others to build a network which strengthens the preparedness and resiliency of NJ communities.

NJVOAD has been very fortunate to receive grants to support recovery and resiliency throughout the State. We were able to expand the scope of this work through a CNCS grant to utilize VISTA (Volunteers in Service to America) members to provide capacity-building support for long-term recovery in Sandy-affected communities while building and strengthening preparedness and resilience efforts in all 21 counties. Over the course of 2 years, NJVOAD has been able to leverage these resources to support on-going recovery work and establish a VOAD presence in every county in NJ. NJVOAD pioneered the utilization of the VISTA program for capacity-building in the areas of disaster recovery and community resiliency and preparedness efforts. For example, our team of VISTA members worked in Union County to provide community outreach events for long-term recovery efforts and identify non-profit and Governmental partners to be part of the VOAD. VISTA efforts supported long-term recovery efforts in Hudson County, then planned events to transition those relationships into an active VOAD that meets regularly for training and planning purposes. Essex County had a strong showing for the launch of its VOAD group, and has a core team in place which is identifying leadership and organizing a structure that will meet the unique needs of this diverse county. This work has been repeated in all 21 counties throughout NJ where the VOAD movement has been developed or strengthened to ensure greater community preparedness and resiliency. Because of the great work of the two VISTA teams we have had in place, NJVOAD received National recognition and was awarded the 2016 State VOAD of the Year Award. Other State VOADs and relief organizations are looking at this as a model to support disaster response and recovery efforts in the future, and NJVOAD is in discussion with our CNCS and FEMA Region II partners about developing a regional pilot program for New York, New Jersey, Puerto Rico, and the Virgin Islands.

NJVOAD partnered with NJOEM and the Governor's Office of Volunteerism to develop *HELPNJNOW.ORG*, a web-based solution to address the secondary disasters which result when there is no system to manage unaffiliated volunteers and unsolicited donations. When New Jersey is not responding to a declared disaster (the "blue sky" mode), the focus of this site is on personal preparedness with information and links for people to prepare themselves and their families for potential threats. The site also provides education about the best ways to help when a disaster strikes. One primary focus is to encourage people to register and train as a disaster volunteer before a disaster strikes, as trained volunteers are critical to successful disaster relief efforts. Education about donated goods is also a critical focus, as many people don't realize the burden of shipping, sorting, storing, and distributing items.

When a large-scale disaster impacts New Jersey, the site will operate in "gray sky" mode with links to 4 key resources:

- *Monetary Donations.*—Cash is the best way to help in any disaster, as organizations can purchase what is needed locally and help rebuild the economy in impacted communities. NJVOAD utilizes GuideStar and Charity Navigator to vet the organizations listed on *HELPNJNOW.ORG* to minimize potential for fraud or mismanagement.
- *Material Goods.*—Information about items needed will be posted, as well as a portal for people to offer donated goods which will be shared with organizations serving impacted communities.
- *Volunteers.*—The site becomes a virtual volunteer reception center where people who want to help can complete an on-line application and skills inventory and sign up for volunteer opportunities.
- *Information/Assistance.*—For those in need of help, links and numbers to NJ 2-1-1 are provided as well as a link to Google Crisis Maps that includes evacuation routes, shelter locations, street closures, and other critical information.

NJVOAD convened a Call to Collaboration last October to review lessons learned, strengthen partnerships, and identify resources to implement many of the proposed solutions born out of our collective recovery experience. One of these initiatives is the development of educational resources to be utilized in future disasters so that impacted homeowners can make informed decisions before beginning their recovery. We will be looking to our Government partners to assist with methods to disseminate this information publicly in future disasters.

NJVOAD is working closely with the philanthropic community to identify collaborative solutions which will provide for a more effective and sustainable funding stream for future disasters. A big component in the future success of any changes

in funding patterns will require education extending to our Government partners and the public to ensure a better understanding of the need for funding to sustain recovery efforts long-term. The majority of money is donated in the days and weeks following a major disaster with the expectation, and sometimes mandate, to get the funds out immediately. The reality is that these donated dollars should be disbursed in a calculated manner to ensure that funding is not front-loaded during response and early recovery stages when it is needed least. NJVOAD hopes to establish a State-wide advisory group, with representatives from the philanthropic, Government and non-profit communities, to provide guidance and expertise specific to the disaster at hand.

The one problem area that NJVOAD has been unable to address with any lasting impact is perhaps one of the biggest issues at hand: The lack of coordination and continuity in the development and implementation of State-managed programs. NJVOAD has forged relationships with the New Jersey Division of Consumer Affairs (NJDCA), the State Agency with responsibility for development and implementation of the majority of these programs. After initial resistance, the current leadership has opened up to hearing feedback from the VOAD community and making modest adjustments to existing programs, such as allowing Disaster Case Managers (with written consent) to talk with the Housing Advisors and Project Managers who are managing RREM cases. However, these small concessions don't begin to fill the tremendous gap that exists in how these programs are designed and integrated into the disaster recovery framework. We have seen our VOAD partners in Colorado and other States have a role and input in working with their State government to design and implement programs that are logical and survivor-focused. NJDCA has held public hearings on how they are spending the billions of CDBG-DR funds they have received, but the feedback provided in these hearings has not resulted in any programmatic changes of note. A stronger citizen action plan should be mandated which requires input and involvement of disaster survivors and recovery entities during formation of any proposed disaster recovery action plans.

The Joint Field Office (JFO) model is an inspired structure designed to enhance communication and coordination between Federal and State entities in disaster response and recovery. Better integration and staffing of the JFO to include State decision makers responsible for the development and implementation of recovery programs could go a long way in minimizing duplication of efforts, misunderstanding, miscommunication, and lack of integration of Governmental programs.

NJVOAD is committed to working with our public and private-sector partners to be part of the solution in implementing lessons learned from Sandy and preparing our communities to weather whatever storms might lie ahead. Thank you for convening this hearing and providing me the opportunity to share this testimony.

Mr. DONOVAN. Thank you, Ms. Higgs.

The Chair now recognizes myself for a few moments to ask some questions.

You spoke about trying to coordinate efforts among non-profits, yet there is nobody who oversees all the not-for-profits. So I want to ask you, Vin, on the Federal level, do we need another layer of bureaucracy? No one likes bureaucracy, or another layer of it. But should there be some kind of oversight? This may overlap, Ms. Higgs, with what you were talking about. Should there be some oversight or coordination of all activities so that we're not doing duplicative services and making sure we are satisfying everyone's needs?

Mr. IGNIZIO. Well, I can speak to Staten Island from both sides. Look, my concern is that it occurs, if that does occur, on a county level, on the closest level to the people. If you have the Federal Government coordinating it—I mean, it was quite some time before we saw any assistance from the Federal Government. It was several days, and those first couple of days are the ones that mean the most to the Staten Island community. There were times when they were literally out of their homes, literally don't have water. There were people who were stuck in their attic, as you will recall. There were some very scary times during the initial 48 hours and there-

after. So I would be reticent to support a large organization or a large Governmental entity that is going to oversee.

What needs to occur is—and I think our president has been working on this, and non-profits on Staten Island have been meeting to say, OK, we are going non-profits, what resources do we have geographically, and then what resources do we have to be able to support in case of another emergency. Those conversations have been on-going and continue to be, and I think we are more prepared for the future just in case. We know now that if something happens, the South Shore, the Mount Loretto campus, which is 170 acres, which has massive abilities, has the ability to act as a distribution center, has the ability to act. We know that the JCC is always there in mid-Island. I don't mean one juxtaposed to another. We know geographically that there are folks who want to help throughout Staten Island.

I think county-based is the way to go, and I think the borough president has been trying to bring that together as well, and I think that is the more appropriate forum for it.

Mr. DONOVAN. Do the other panelists agree?

Ms. HIGGS. I think that what we did in New Jersey is where there wasn't a VOAD present at the county level previously, we worked with long-term recovery organizations as they started to sort-of get defunded, and made sure that we maintained those relationships around the table so that all the things that you learned from Sandy, you will keep those relationships in place and know them for the next disaster, whatever that might be. So the VOAD movement was born out of the desire to reduce the amount of duplication of benefits and services and resources that are out there, because we know that non-profits have very limited resources. We don't want to all be doing the same thing. Let's work together and divide and conquer.

Mr. DONOVAN. You testified about how FEMA, HUD, and the VA all helped hospitals at the same time. Again, how do you coordinate that, especially at a time of a disaster when there is chaos? I suspect you have to be prepared for that before the disaster occurs so everybody knows what they are doing. You have many suggestions in your testimony about how we can improve our efforts after the lessons we learned from Katrina but didn't implement, the lessons we learned after Sandy that we are trying to implement. How do you do that without putting another layer of bureaucracy on top?

Mr. GAIR. I am not sure you need another layer of bureaucracy, Mr. Chairman. This is FEMA's job. FEMA's job is to coordinate, and it is just hit or miss sometimes. They get very caught up in delivering their standard programs, which require a lot of effort and have a lot of money involved. But the coordination of those is just as important, and it is missing out. They are very good at giving individual grants to Bellevue Hospital or to NYU Langone, and they may have completely different project officers working on those, but they are not talking together. They are not stepping back and saying is it better for Bellevue to build a wall around themselves and VA to build a wall around themselves and Langone to build a wall around themselves, or can we build a wall that might be more cost-effective and more effective by talking to everybody?

Coordination doesn't make things harder, it makes it easier. You just have to make it a central part of what you do and not an after-thought.

Mr. DONOVAN. My time has run out, but I would love to ask you about hospitals because this hospital, like I said, is in the flood zone. You were clobbered, but yet you remained open and were caring for patients. Can the Federal Government help you? You can't move your hospital. The walls that you spoke about, maybe someone could build one around your hospital, but in the interim is there a role for the Federal Government to help you provide the services that you provided during Sandy?

Ms. MORAVICK. Sure. I think what is really important is, before we get to a disaster, is what do we need to do? One size does not fit all. I think that it is really identifying what those risks are at the hospital level. Is there a role for FEMA? Yes, there is a role for FEMA at the local level.

Mr. DONOVAN. My time has expired. I can't yield any more to Don because I don't have any myself.

The Chair recognizes my friend, Don Payne.

Mr. PAYNE. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Just to comment quickly on Ms. Moravick's testimony, that you had the foresight 3 days in advance to start getting ready should be considered a best practice, and we should learn that the storm potentially has the possibility to turn our way and wreak devastation.

Mr. Gair, tell us how you really feel.

[Laughter.]

Mr. PAYNE. We learned a great deal from your testimony there, and I appreciate it.

But let me ask Ms. Higgs and Mr. Ignizio, each of you shared important information on how charities and non-profit organizations can assist in disaster response and recovery efforts. Can you talk about how State and local emergency responders coordinate with your organizations?

Mr. IGNIZIO. Well, I can speak for myself. Currently, they don't. We have not had the level of outreach that we would like, and that is why we are happy to learn of the county role. We are working amongst each other, the other non-profits on Staten Island, to identify resources we have and how to redeploy them or deploy them as needed to help Staten Island.

The reality is that non-profits do it better. We do it faster. We are on the ground that day. Waiting for the cavalry to arrive is fine, but you need help immediately, and I think we do it better, more efficiently and, quite frankly, more cost-effectively. So I would encourage the Federal Government to invest, not necessarily with funds but to invest in helping non-profit organizations become that safety net for when real disaster strikes to be there on the ground immediately.

Mr. PAYNE. So basically to hold the fort until we show up, the Federal Government.

Mr. IGNIZIO. Yes, sir.

Mr. PAYNE. Ms. Higgs.

Ms. HIGGS. I would echo that. The non-profits are really the first to be there and the last to leave. So any additional support that

can be given to provide additional financial, as well as infrastructure support for that to be in place I think is really important.

In New Jersey at the State level, there is a State VAL, or voluntary agency liaison, that is the representative that connects the Office of Emergency Management, which is run through the State Police, with the State VOAD and other non-profit organizations. So we enjoy a good relationship with the State Police, who is our Office of Emergency Management, and when disaster strikes NJVOAD has a seat at the rock, which is our State emergency operation center. We were there for weeks during Sandy. Then when other smaller-scale disasters have been on the horizon, when winter storm Jonas was hitting, and when Joaquim was sort-of threatening last October, we were convening calls in advance and working with our OEM partners.

What we are trying to do is make sure that that same relationship is replicated at the county level as well, to echo some of what Mr. Ignizio was saying before. We want to make sure that those relationships are there in place, and when we set up VOADs at the local level, at the community level, we have been successful in most of our counties. For example, in Hudson County and in Union County, the OEM coordinators are very active in the VOAD and getting that established, and we are hoping to have that repeated in Essex County as well as we are looking to start there.

Mr. PAYNE. OK. Well, let me know how that is moving along in terms of Essex County.

Ms. HIGGS. OK.

Mr. PAYNE. Being the composition of my district, as I mentioned in my opening statement, I am really concerned about what we are doing to address the unique impact of disasters on low-income communities that normally have the most difficult time in these emergencies. Can you talk about what resources are available for low-income communities affected by disaster, and what we can do to make them more prepared and resilient?

Mr. GAIR. Mr. Payne, the challenge is that all the same resources are available in low-income communities as everywhere else, and what we need to do is make more of an effort to penetrate into those communities. A lot of times the communications are not as easy, the languages may be different than English, and while information is put out in many languages, we really don't make that extra effort to get out to the communities to make sure that people understand the opportunities and then use the funds to try and make things better.

The HUD CDBG-DR program springs from the HUD CDBG program, which is for low- and moderate-income families. So we need to take those funds and look for opportunities not just to fix those things that were damaged by the hurricane but to find ways to make those communities more resilient as a whole. There is tremendous flexibility there, and I don't think it gets used as much as it could in the low-income areas.

Mr. IGNIZIO. Can I make a point with that? I mean, Brad will remember when we had the issue in New Dorp, we had members of the Mexican population, many of which were undocumented, who refused to take any assistance at all because they were afraid that writing their name and their address on a piece of paper

would end up with them having issues with the Federal Government thereafter. So it wasn't until I think it was Make the Road who came in and started going door to door with help to let people know we are just here to help, we are just here to triage, there is no issue with regards to your status in the country, that they started accepting some assistance; because, if you recall, that was a big problem that we had primarily, as I recall, in the New Dorp area.

Mr. PAYNE. OK. Ms. Higgs.

Ms. HIGGS. I think when it comes to low-income households, they are the most vulnerable. Unfortunately, when disaster strikes, they are usually the hardest hit and the last to be able to start the recovery process. We have certainly seen that in New Jersey, especially in the urban communities that were impacted. I think anything that we can do—the non-profits are really sometimes the network where they feel most comfortable. What we found, especially in Newark, in the city of Newark, is that people went to their local churches and their houses of worship because that was where they felt most comfortable.

So again, I sort-of feel like I am preaching the VOAD mantra here, but having those community organizations and those local churches, being part of that network, is important because that is one of the ways to get that information out to a large network of people that would not necessarily hear the message otherwise.

Mr. PAYNE. Yes, I appreciate that. The churches in Newark really played a pivotal part.

Ms. HIGGS. They were instrumental.

Mr. PAYNE. Even serving 10,000 to 15,000 meals a day during that time.

But with that, Mr. Chairman, I will yield back.

Mr. DONOVAN. Thank you, Don.

One of the advantages of being the last panel is that I can actually give you an opportunity if there was something that was stirred up in your minds during our conversation, questions that we didn't cover with you that you think would be important for us to bring back to the District of Columbia. We would welcome anything else that was not in your testimony or may have come to your mind hearing the other witnesses speak or that was stimulated by—not that any of our questions were stimulating, but—

[Laughter.]

Mr. DONOVAN. But if there is something that came up, we allow you this opportunity now before we close down.

Mr. IGNIZIO. I will just add one thing. Some ways the Federal Government can be helpful is with their vast amount of resources. So we have a 170-acre campus. You have a storm coming. We can welcome, if you will, redeployed assets onto our campus for, God forbid, if it is needed and hope that it is not. That type of pre-coordination is something that we as Catholic Charities of Staten Island would welcome at both of our sites, either at Port Richmond or at Mount Loretto. The vast amount of resources that the Federal Government has, if it is placed there at the beginning of the season or a week before we hear a hurricane is coming, we would be happy—we want to be a part of the solution. We don't want what occurred to occur again.

I recall us looking for buses to be able to bring people to and from the shelter system, and where are we going to get them from, from the MTA, from the school system, things like that. Maybe the Federal Government has ways of being helpful, we have supplies, we have buses, we have apparatus in place that we can bring in before a disaster strikes that can be helpful. Should the storm not occur or it not be as serious, then it just goes back to where it was.

Mr. DONOVAN. You want to be helpful. You just want to get reimbursed.

Mr. GAIR. I think I would just like to reiterate the fact that the real challenge here is that everybody is trying to do the right things. The Federal agencies have programs. They are trying to deliver the aid. The cities are trying to take the rules and use the rules and make them work. The voluntary agencies are trying to fill the gaps. The private sector is standing ready. But we are not putting it all together, and I think that is because we don't have all the right programs tied together the way that they should be, so we end up with people not getting the help that they need.

So we really have to work on that piece of it. After 9/11, when I was the Federal recovery officer and people said, well, the FEMA acts really were designed for natural disasters, and this is an act of terror, so what are we going to do in New York and New Jersey? Do we need a new FEMA Stafford Act just for that? As we looked at it, the answer is it is all there. It is all there in the Stafford Act because it is so flexible. Basically, the President can direct agencies to do whatever needs to be done to get places back to where they were. But then we build a lot of regulations around that that tie our own hands.

So I think we need to go back and look at what we can do with the authorities that we have in place to let these people do what they do best if you let them, and that is get the job done. That is why people join the Federal Government, the State government, and the city government. They want to help. We just keep tying their hands in ways that make it harder to do so.

Mr. DONOVAN. Some people even join Congress for that.

[Laughter.]

Mr. GAIR. Thank God.

Mr. PAYNE. I resemble that remark.

[Laughter.]

Mr. DONOVAN. I think we all are saying that, we all agree with my friend Mr. Ignizio, who said that preparing ahead of time, because during a chaotic situation like a natural disaster or a terrorist attack is not the time to figure out who is supplying the buses.

Ms. Moravick.

Ms. MORAVICK. We put an application in for the HMPG grant, and it took quite a bit of time to get it. We went through at least 3 more hurricane seasons. So I think a little more coordination of who is doing what would be helpful, because as I hear and listen to the news of the wind and the weather and the rain, we even had a subsequent rain storm, a 500-year event which flooded out our first floor in August 2014, which was a disaster. In our ICU, we had mulch coming down the hallways. So we really need to strengthen and support our campus, and I think we started on our

own. We invested \$6 million, but it is to a point where we really need to make that huge investment of \$25 million to harden the campus. Thanks.

Ms. HIGGS. Thank you for the opportunity to have a final word here. Coordination has sort of been straining throughout this whole thing, better coordination among our Federal agencies with the States, with the non-profits, just better coordination and cooperation throughout. I think one of the things that we have seen with what we have been able to do in New Jersey with some funding for our VOAD, we have been able to really see that happen at the State level and at the county level. When we presented on this at a National conference, all the other States were saying, how do we do this? We have been fortunate to get funding that we had from Hurricane Sandy that we have been able to use to leverage to do preparedness and resiliency work throughout the State.

VOAD is not a funded organization. I am the only staff person of a VOAD throughout the whole Nation. The National VOAD has staff, but none of the other States do. So the work that we have been able to do we were able to do through private funding that we were able to raise and a Corporation for National Community Service grant. I think what we would like to see is that effort replicated on a National level because we have shown that it really does work in New Jersey. We haven't—knock on wood—had the ability to test it in a live situation, but we are in a much better position now than we were 3½ years ago. It is because of an investment of funds in the non-profit structure throughout New Jersey to strengthen resiliency and preparedness throughout.

Mr. PAYNE. Ms. Higgs, would the CDBG-DR funds be something that you could use?

Ms. HIGGS. We certainly could, and it is something we have looked at. From what I understand, they are generally applied State-by-State. So we as an organization could apply through the State of New Jersey. What we are really trying to do—we obviously want to continue to find some funds that would sustain on-going, but we really want to help the other 49 States and the territories to be able to replicate what we have been able to do in New Jersey because that just strengthens the overall infrastructure when it comes to that. So, yes, CDBG-DR funds are certainly an answer, but anything that we can do to really try to bring this outside of New Jersey's confines to help the Nation is something that we are hoping to do.

Mr. DONOVAN. Well, I thank the witnesses for your testimony and your suggestions. I guarantee they have not fallen on deaf ears. This is the fourth hearing that I have conducted. The three other hearings that were conducted resulted in legislation to improve the systems which were already in place. We will take back your suggestions and your testimony with us to the remainder of the committee. There are other committee Members from all parts of the country, and I guess they didn't want to come to Staten Island for the pizza. They are so unlucky.

[Laughter.]

Mr. DONOVAN. But I thank you all for your testimony.

The other Members of the subcommittee may have questions when we get back to Washington, and they may submit those. I

would ask that you submit answers to those within 10 days. The hearing record will be held open for an additional 10 days.

The subcommittee stands adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 11:14 a.m., the subcommittee was adjourned.]

APPENDIX

QUESTIONS FROM CHAIRMAN DANIEL M. DONOVAN, JR. FOR MICHAEL BYRNE

Question 1. A common theme from witnesses on the second panel at the field hearing was the need for better coordination and collaboration—between and among Federal agencies and with State and local governments and non-profit and private-sector agencies.

We are in the early months of another hurricane season. How are FEMA and HUD working to ensure that any response and recovery efforts will be appropriately coordinated?

Answer. The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) has primary oversight for Federal response, recovery, and mitigation operations, for all hazards, including hurricanes. FEMA is the coordinating authority for all Federal interagency partners in support of incident operations. Federal departments and agencies along with local, State, Tribal, and territorial governments and others, such as non-profits and private-sector entities, must understand each other's roles and responsibilities and cooperate to achieve shared goals.

The Federal Government organizes and coordinates response and recovery resources and capabilities under the Emergency Support Function (ESF) and Recovery Support Function (RSF) constructs. ESFs and RSFs are groups of organizations that work together to manage resources and deliver capabilities that support resiliency and response and recovery. By not focusing on the capabilities of a single department or agency ESFs and RSFs support effective interagency coordination.

FEMA works with its National-level partner ESF and RSF agencies to develop risk-specific, coordinated interagency operational plans and exercises for all hazards, including hurricanes. Within this construct, each partner agency prepares its own plans for how it will execute its portion of the coordinated response mission. The ESF coordinating agencies met at the start of the 2016 Hurricane Season to discuss new plans, procedures, forecasting, and storm surge modeling capabilities as well as to identify potential capability gaps and other concerns of each ESF for the 2016 hurricane season.

As one example of this on-going coordination, FEMA and the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) support the coordination of interagency efforts for all hazards in addition to hurricane planning. HUD is the coordinating agency for the Housing RSF, and has taken a major role in 2016 Recovery Support Function Leadership Group (RSFLG) planning and operational initiatives, e.g. RSFLG annual strategic planning session, RSFLG Readiness Assessment, and Flint, MI assessment and coordination efforts.

HUD and FEMA recently held two coordination meetings with the FEMA Individual Assistance Division, FEMA Interagency Coordination Division (ICD), and HUD to enhance outreach and on-the-ground coordination in preparation for any potential natural disasters. HUD is also working on earlier engagement with FEMA as illustrated with the recent West Virginia (WV) flooding. Prior to receiving any mission assignments for WV, HUD staff and resources were made available during the response to initiate planning and preparation for the eventual recovery effort. These efforts are ensuring HUD is better coordinated and is providing consistent advice/technical support to State, local, and private-sector agencies.

Further, the President's fiscal year 2017 budget proposal requests statutory authority to transfer the responsibilities for the Emergency Food and Shelter Program (EFSP) from FEMA to HUD for fiscal year 2017. FEMA and HUD believe that this transition will improve program mission alignment, improve coordination, increase accountability and transparency, and maximize the effectiveness of the use of these funds.

Additionally, Regional FEMA Readiness Assessment Program (F-RAP) efforts have focused on interagency coordination to further facilitate implementation of the National Disaster Recovery Framework (NDRF). A component of these efforts is

identification of potential best practices to be shared across regional, State, local, Tribal, and territorial stakeholders. An example recently identified from the Region II F-RAP pertaining to housing recovery efforts after Hurricane Sandy is the New Jersey/New York Federal Leadership Resilience Collaborative (“the Collaborative”). The Collaborative was referenced in Deputy Regional Administrator Michael Byrne’s July 11, 2016 testimony.*

Question 2. What additional changes to current law would you recommend to enhance your ability to prepare for, respond to, or recover from storms like Superstorm Sandy?

Answer. On June 6, 2016, FEMA transmitted a legislative proposal titled the “Disaster Workforce Flexibility Act” to Congress. The proposal would grant competitive status to allow certain temporary FEMA employees to apply for permanent positions under merit promotion procedures. A significant portion of FEMA’s response and recovery capabilities resides in its Reservist workforce and Cadre of On-Call Response/Recovery Employees (COREs). FEMA Reservist and CORE personnel provide valuable and essential services at FEMA headquarters, regional offices, and disaster Joint Field Offices, in the immediate lead-up to, during, and after an emergency or major disaster. However, unlike permanent Federal employees, these vital personnel currently are not eligible to compete for vacant Federal permanent positions under merit promotion procedures. This change would allow FEMA the flexibility to potentially fill competitive service vacancies at FEMA with COREs and Reservists through merit promotion procedures.

Additionally, this change would provide a strong incentive for people to join FEMA through these programs because this status would allow for a greater opportunity to attain a permanent, competitive service position in the future. This incentive would serve to attract more applicants who aspire to a career in the Federal service, particularly in the field of emergency response, recovery, and management. A larger pool of candidates for the FEMA Reservist and CORE programs would potentially provide FEMA with access to applicants with a broader array of skills, qualifications, and experience than may exist currently.

FEMA welcomes the opportunity to provide technical assistance regarding this legislative proposal and looks forward to continuing to work with Congress as they develop proposed legislation relating to FEMA’s Stafford Act authorities.

QUESTIONS FROM CHAIRMAN DANIEL M. DONOVAN, JR. FOR MARION MOLLEGEN
MCFADDEN

Question 1a. In response to Superstorm Sandy, Congress appropriated \$16 billion in CDBG funds for disaster relief. In the legislative language of the Disaster Appropriations Act, 2013, Congress specifically elected not to restrict eligibility for CDBG funds for for-profit entities. Congress did, however, authorize the Secretary of Housing and Urban Development to specify alternative requirements for CDBG disaster assistance funds.

When HUD issued its Notice providing guidance for the initial allocation of \$5.4 billion in funding under the CDBG Program for Hurricane Sandy relief, the HUD press release announcing the initial allocation of funding stated that “CDBG Disaster Recovery funding gives grantees significant flexibility in determining how best to use their funds to meet the greatest unmet needs.” Despite this language, however, the HUD guidance imposed a new restriction on the use of CDBG funds for repairs to utility infrastructure. The Notice imposed an alternative requirement that HUD disaster relief funds may “not be used to assist a privately-owned utility for any purpose.” The alternative requirement also limited assistance to for-profit businesses only to small businesses.

How is HUD’s “alternative requirement” not inconsistent with existing law? Under 42 U.S.C. Section 5305(a)(17)(C), CDBG funding can be used to provide assistance to “private, for-profit entities, when the assistance . . . meets urgent needs.” Under existing HUD regulations (24 C.F.R. Section 570.201(1), CDBG funds may be used “to acquire, construct, reconstruct, rehabilitate, or install the distribution lines and facilities of privately-owned utilities, including the placing under-

*“A New Jersey/New York Federal Leadership Resilience Collaborative (“the Collaborative”) was established and meets regularly to share information on key infrastructure projects and promote regional resilience. The Collaborative is comprised of Regional Administrators and other senior staff from FEMA, the U.S. Department of Interior, U.S. Department of Transportation, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, EPA, and HUD. The Collaborative provides an unparalleled forum for Federal officials to develop a strategic approach to foster a more comprehensive region-wide planning for risk reductions and provides opportunities for leveraging Federal dollars.”

ground of new or existing distribution facilities and lines.” Neither this existing law nor these regulations were changed by the Disaster Appropriations Act, 2103.

Answer. Benefit to low- and moderate-income persons is the primary objective of the CDBG program (Section 5301(c) of Title 42 of the United States Code). While the required overall low- and moderate-income threshold for CDBG-DR funds was reduced by Public Law (Pub. L.) 113-2 in comparison to the annual CDBG program, the Department is acutely aware that low- and moderate-income households are the least likely to recover in the wake of a major declared disaster. In implementing CDBG-DR supplemental appropriations, HUD seeks to ensure that adequate resources are available to assist this population. HUD uses multiple strategies to ensure that the recovery needs of low- and moderate-income households are prioritized, one of which is ensuring that entities with insurance and financial resources that may be devoted to recovery are, in fact, used to fund recovery activities. The decision to use the CDBG-DR “alternative requirement” authority of Pub. L. 113-2 to limit the use of CDBG-DR assistance to small business entities is in keeping with the goals of maximizing assistance available for low- and moderate-income populations while also maximizing private financial resources. The appropriation required HUD to publish any such alternative requirements in the *Federal Register*.

The Department’s March 5, 2013 *Federal Register* Notice implemented CDBG-DR funding appropriated by Pub. L. 113-2 and contained an alternative requirement to Section 5305(a) of Title 42 of the United States Code that limited the broader, usual eligible use of CDBG funds under Sections 5305(a)(14) and (17). The regulation cited in the question, Section 570.201(1) of Title 24 of the Code of Federal Regulations, is an implementation of the statutorily-eligible uses of CDBG funds under Section 5305(a)(14) and (17), which were limited through the March 5 Notice. The March 5 Notice states that “For each waiver and alternative requirement described in this Notice the Secretary has determined that good cause exists and the action is not inconsistent with the overall purpose of the HCD Act.”

These provisions of the March 5, 2013, Notice reflect the administration’s December 7, 2012 transmission to then Speaker of the House John Boehner requesting an appropriation of Federal funds in response to Hurricane Sandy. In outlining the HUD portion of that request, the administration noted: “. . . business repair funds should be directed to unmet small business damage only, and except for small businesses that face long-term business disruption, funds should not be used to restore lost revenue.” (see page 29, paragraph 6 of the Appendix to the December 7, 2012, submission, available at https://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/supplemental_december_7_2012_hurricane_sandy_funding_needs.pdf).

Question 1b. Do you agree that the alternative requirements established by HUD under the 2013 Disaster Relief Appropriations Act should not be treated by HUD as a precedent for the repair or rebuilding of privately-owned utility infrastructure?

Answer. HUD has maintained the prohibition on assistance to private utilities in its most recent *Federal Register* Notice implementing the fiscal year 2016 appropriation of \$300 million in CDBG-DR funding to address the impact of 2015 flooding in South Carolina and Texas (81 Fed. Reg. 39707). Grantees under the fiscal year 2016 appropriation or under the appropriation made by Public Law 113-2 may also seek a waiver of HUD requirements. To date, the sole request for a waiver of the private utility prohibition under either appropriation has been from the State of New Jersey, for the purpose of implementing its Energy Resilience Bank. HUD approved the State’s waiver request in a *Federal Register* Notice published on August 25, 2015 (80 Fed. Reg. 51590).

Question 2. A common theme from witnesses on the second panel at the field hearing was the need for better coordination and collaboration—between and among Federal agencies and with State and local governments and non-profit and private-sector agencies.

We are in the early months of another hurricane season. How are FEMA and HUD working to ensure that any response and recovery efforts will be appropriately coordinated?

Answer. As part of the long-term recovery efforts following Hurricane Sandy, FEMA and HUD leadership initiated a number of joint interagency teams and meetings in the region to ensure on-going relationships, information sharing, and collaborative effort. These teams and meetings include appropriate experts and responsible officials in disaster response and recovery across Federal, State, and local government levels. FEMA and HUD have also worked closely on preparedness and training to enhance the awareness of critical information and operations needs in disaster response and recovery.

HUD participates in the Unified Federal Environmental and Historic Preservation Review Process that was directed by the Sandy Recovery Improvement Act of 2013 and established by a Memorandum of Understanding on July 2014. This process en-

hances the ability of Federal agencies to expedite environmental and historic preservation reviews for disaster recovery projects through tools and coordination resources.

Question 3. What additional changes to current law would you recommend to enhance your ability to prepare for, respond to, or recover from storms like Superstorm Sandy?

Answer. CDBG-DR funds.—There is no standing legislative authorization for HUD’s CDBG-GR assistance following a disaster, or, indeed several other important programs such as DOT’s transit emergency relief program. Each appropriation of CDBG-DR funds has been a supplemental appropriation enacted after the disaster has struck—often with nuanced differences in the appropriations language—and after the Federal response from FEMA, SBA, and other agencies is well underway. The administration and HUD recognize this mismatch and thus included the following statement in the President’s fiscal year 2017 budget request: “. . . To ensure a more orderly and efficient recovery process, in 2016, the administration will work with agencies across the Federal Government, as well as public stakeholders to develop a standing authorization proposal for the provision of CDBG-DR funds. This proposed authorization would incorporate lessons learned from previous disasters, provide clarity and predictability over CDBG-DR funding and program guidelines, and improve the alignment of CDBG-DR funds with other Federal programs” (Fiscal year 2017 President’s budget appendix, HUD). The Department is currently engaged in executing this directive and may use the information gathered to develop a future proposal.

Improve data sharing between Federal agencies.—In order to provide disaster assistance through any Federally-funded program, CDBG-DR grantees must have access to Federal data to allow them to adequately document eligibility and need. These data contain personally identifiable information about individuals receiving assistance and the challenges associated with obtaining this data can result in significant delays for grantees and beneficiaries. Exploring ways for HUD and other Federal agencies to more readily share data between the agencies and with grantees would improve the Federal response. The Department is currently working with FEMA to implement a data-sharing agreement that would allow the Department to provide timely information about recipients of disaster assistance to CDBG-DR grantees.

Consistently apply Federal requirements.—Many disaster recovery activities have multiple Federal funding sources that in turn introduce Federal requirements that are specific to each source. When HUD funds are used in conjunction with other Federal funds, for the same project, differing requirements are triggered at different times. For example, HUD funds for most housing and community development projects require compliance with Section 3 of the Housing and Community Development Act of 1968, which requires grantees to demonstrate that economic opportunities arising from the project are provided, to the greatest extent possible, to low- and very-low income persons. This is a requirement that is unique to HUD-funded projects and grantees routinely face challenges in incorporating Section 3 provisions into agreements with other Federal agencies when attempting to use HUD funds for a project that is also funded with other Federal sources. Providing consistent cross-cutting requirements across all Federal sources of disaster assistance would improve coordination of the Federal response.

Streamline environmental review requirements.—Basic housing rehabilitation projects are subject to the same Federal environmental review requirements that apply to more complex and impactful recovery projects. Two recent CDBG-DR appropriations authorized grantees to use the environmental review of one Federal agency to satisfy the environmental review requirements of another agency. Further exploring ways to expedite environmental reviews for housing rehabilitation and other less complex recovery projects could also accelerate recovery.

