



The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

MASSACHUSETTS BLACK AND LATINO LEGISLATIVE CAUCUS

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Massachusetts Black and Latino Legislative Caucus Urges For Massachusetts Intervention In Hurricane Relief Efforts in The Commonwealth of Puerto Rico

BOSTON – In the weeks following the Category 5 Hurricane Maria that hit Puerto Rico, the Massachusetts Black and Latino Legislative Caucus (MBLLC) continues its efforts to help the island recover.

“Our fathers, mothers, sisters, brothers, friends, and loved ones are suffering following the devastating hurricane”, said MBLLC member, Representative Carlos Gonzalez (D-Springfield). *“Today, almost two weeks after the storm, several Caucus members are still struggling to hear from their loved ones on the Island”,* he continued.

Immediately following the storm, the MBLLC responded by urging the Baker Administration to support emergency assistance relief efforts in Puerto Rico. Specifically, the Caucus advocated to the Administration for the replication of efforts of other states that utilized state resources to transport supplies to the Island.

“I’ve been communicating with Governor Baker almost daily since the hurricane”, said MBLLC Chair, Representative Frank Moran (D-Lawrence). *“I needed to emphasize how much this disaster impacted the Island and approximate 300,000 Puerto Ricans who call Massachusetts home”* he continued.

In a letter to Governor Baker, the MBLLC requested assistance with coordinating and allowing cargo flights from Massachusetts to Puerto Rico and stated, *“New York, Connecticut, Pennsylvania and others have already mobilized for Puerto Rico. We hope Massachusetts will do the same”*. In subsequent outreach, the MBLLC asked the Governor to activate the state National Guard to respond to this emergency. They also pushed for the Administration to launch relocation planning efforts for the expected arrival of Puerto Rican citizens to Massachusetts in need of housing, education, workforce, and other supports.

The MBLLC also called on the Massachusetts congressional delegation to advocate for the Federal government to play a stronger role in the hurricane relief efforts in Puerto Rico. This call for action included the repeal of the Jones Act as it applies to Puerto Rico and any island United States territories to allow for the transporting of critically-needed cargo and personnel supports to the region; the inclusion of Puerto Rico in the \$15.2 billion in Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) funding package created in response to Hurricanes Harvey and Irma; and finally Medicaid parity for low-income Puerto Rican residents who currently receive lower Medicaid reimbursements in comparison to U.S. mainland residents.

“Together, we believe that these actions will help to prevent a humanitarian crisis”, said Representative Moran.

The MBLLC plans to continue its advocacy for Massachusetts involvement in Puerto Rico hurricane relief work. MBLLC members encourages Massachusetts residents to get involved by supporting the various charity drives taking place across the Commonwealth in cites including Boston, Springfield, Lawrence, Holyoke, and Westfield.

For more information on the Massachusetts Black and Latino Legislative Caucus, please visit:

www.mablacklatinocaucus.com/

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