

**QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD  
SUBMITTED BY  
Congresswoman Dina Titus, Chairwoman**

Mr. Michael Sprayberry  
Director, North Carolina Emergency Management

on behalf of the  
National Emergency Management Association  
Testimony Presented October 22, 2019

**Navigating Multiple Federal Disaster Recovery Programs**

1. Mr. Sprayberry, your State has been impacted multiple times during the last several years by natural disasters warranting Presidential-declarations and Federal assistance. What has been your experience with FEMA coordinating the various Federal assistance and recovery programs for which the State has qualified?

[If FEMA assistance has been helpful] Has your primary FEMA official assisting the state been your various Federal Coordinating Officers, or a Federal Disaster Recovery Coordinator?

**Response:** We have worked closely with our Federal Disaster Recovery Coordinator through this process. We did experience a challenge, however, when our original Federal Disaster Recovery Coordinator was transferred from working with us in North Carolina to work in Puerto Rico. This interrupted our rhythm of recovery and we did not receive a satisfactory answer as to why this transfer occurred. We believe this to be related to the limited staffing capacity FEMA currently faces. The issue of FEMA staffing (both in numbers and proper training) negatively impacts many of my colleagues as well.

2. You are responsible for not only helping your State navigate through FEMA's recovery programs, but also with the recent allocations of HUD CDBG-DR funding. Has this been a seamless process to leverage both programs? If they do not currently work hand in hand, what changes must be made in order for them to be more complimentary?

**Response:** Both programs serve critical functions in our state. Unfortunately, disaster survivors must apply separately to FEMA programs and Community Development Block Grant – Disaster Recovery (CDBG-DR). These separate applications prevent a seamless process for individuals and states to leverage both programs. A reform to this process would be developing a “universal application,” which would allow survivors to complete one application that would then be used by FEMA, the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), and the Small Business Administration. Additionally, a standardized duplication of benefit review for all agencies would mitigate issues that arise between the programs. These changes would streamline the process for survivors

and demonstrate our commitment at all levels of government to supporting our residents as they work to recover from a disaster.

Furthermore, the timelines for FEMA grant completion and an active CDBG-DR program are not integrated. Ensuring that these funding programs do not leave survivors without resources will improve the quality of customer service we are able to provide our residents. Ways to achieve this include permanently authorizing CDBG-DR and ensuring FEMA accomplishes their statutory mission of acting as coordinator of federal resources.

### **FEMA's Public Assistance Program**

3. What has been your State's experience with FEMA's National Delivery Model for its Public Assistance program? With your tenure working for the State before and after rollout of the new PA delivery model, do you feel that the new model will help cut through the red tape of Federal disaster recovery?

**Response:** The implementation of any new delivery model is not a seamless process, but in North Carolina's experience with the new model been generally positive and the initial challenges of implementation have been largely resolved. For smaller disasters, we would like the opportunity to develop projects on site rather than forwarding to the Consolidated Resource Center (CRC).

4. Following Sandy, this Committee was successful in passing a significant package of Stafford Act updates that included the then new Section 428, also known as "Alternative Procedures for Public Assistance."

428 was used extensively in the wake of Sandy and large projects that States opted to use it for seemed to move much faster than standard Public Assistance projects completed under the traditional Section 406 program.

We've now seen that where 428 is being used for all recovery projects – in Puerto Rico – that the process is no longer expedited. It appears that FEMA has created new red tape in its administration of 428. Has that been your State's experience?

**Response:** It does appear that FEMA is requiring more from the applicant than originally anticipated for Section 428 projects. FEMA is conducting business through the Public Assistance delivery model to create a more efficient, timely, accurate, and successful process to recovery efforts. All projects are to go through the delivery model and grants portal to make the process more efficient and more transparent. As previously noted, new processes take time to implement and the initial challenges have largely been resolved although more training and experience is needed for working with Alternative Procedures at the Federal, State and Local level.

**QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD**  
**SUBMITTED BY**  
**Congressman Mark Meadows, Ranking Member**

Mr. Michael Sprayberry  
Director, North Carolina Emergency Management

on behalf of the  
National Emergency Management Association  
Testimony Presented October 22, 2019

1. Mr. Sprayberry, you highlight what you call the “cacophony” of federal grants programs and the fact they can be confusing. Do you believe that there needs to be better coordination and consistency across the various federal agencies that provide disaster assistance?

**Response:** Yes. According to the GAO more than \$400 billion was obligated to disaster assistance over 17 federal departments and agencies during fiscal years 2005 to 2017. This amalgam of programs requires dedicated efforts to coordinate and strengthen consistency to ensure disaster survivors can access the programs most applicable to their situations and the state utilizes taxpayer dollars in the most efficient manner possible. FEMA is responsible for coordinating government-wide relief efforts and must continue to work across the federal interagency and with Congress to further improve these processes.

2. Mr. Sprayberry, you recommend anticipating future conditions by broadening allowable project types. Can you provide some examples of the types of projects that should be considered?

**Response:** The goal of FEMA, the states, and localities in the BRIC process is to produce innovative projects stemming from science-based studies-which will improve buildings beyond minimum codes and strengthen infrastructure that can last for generations. It is essential we look beyond the conventional projects that stave off disaster for a year or two and consider how our work will impact resilience. These include mitigation for man-made and technological hazards. We look forward to applying a risk-management approach as we consider projects such as the hardening of interstate highways, our power generation and transmission infrastructure, our water supply and waster water management facilities, as well as floodproofing our communities to name but a few. The relentless onslaught of hurricanes and storms have severely affected our aging infrastructure and BRIC will be critical making progress towards a more resilient state and nation.

3. Mr. Sprayberry, you recommend Congress provide the authority to grantees to blend mitigation projects from funding sources across government. Can you elaborate?

**Response:** Through the Disaster Recovery Reform Act (DRRA), states are being encouraged to develop and implement large-scale, complex infrastructure projects. These projects are multi-faceted and require skills, capacity, and flexibility beyond the current suite of mitigation programs. Congress providing authority to blend mitigation projects from funding sources across government would allow grantees to appropriately scope projects to accomplish tangible ends that focus more on the transformative power of mitigation than a fixed number on a project worksheet.