

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

February 1, 2013

The Honorable Shaun Donovan  
Secretary  
U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development  
451 7<sup>th</sup> Street, S.W.  
Washington, DC 20410

Dear Secretary Donovan:

As you work to establish the long-term recovery plan in New Jersey following Superstorm Sandy, we are writing to request that you offer additional support to residents facing excessive rebuilding costs as a result of new interim FEMA flood maps. The Superstorm Sandy Supplemental Appropriations bill includes \$16 billion for Community Development Block Grants, and this funding should be used to help New Jersey residents pay for the cost of elevating and rebuilding their homes.

Superstorm Sandy was a catastrophic disaster that caused unprecedented damaged throughout our state. New Jersey's coastal communities were hit particularly hard as homes, businesses and local infrastructure was devastated. The State of New Jersey estimates that the storm damaged or destroyed approximately 340,000 homes.

Unfortunately, as residents along the shore deal with financial hardship and widespread suffering following the destruction of Superstorm Sandy, they are facing the prospect of even higher costs to rebuild because of new Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) interim flood maps. FEMA recently released these new Advisory Based Flood Elevations (ABFEs) to provide guidance during the rebuilding process following Superstorm Sandy. Many communities have adopted these standards and Governor Christie has adopted them statewide. As a result, many shore residents are confronting new requirements that their homes be elevated. While it is important to have rebuilding standards that accurately reflect flood risk, we are concerned that homeowners will have to bear the great expense of elevating their homes at a time when they are already struggling to rebuild. In addition, many homeowners feel they have been incorrectly mapped into high-risk flood zones and are facing unfair rebuilding requirements as a result. FEMA should work to address these residents' concerns to ensure homeowners are not unfairly subjected to increased costs as a result of the interim flood maps.

There are a variety of sources the federal government has to help homeowners rebuild. Available sources include the FEMA Individual Assistance program for damaged homes and personal property; FEMA Hazard Mitigation Grants to purchase or elevate homes; the FEMA National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) Increased Cost of Compliance fund, which makes up to \$30,000 available for home elevations for NFIP policy holders; and Small Business Administration disaster loans. However, given the extensive damage caused by Sandy and the new FEMA elevation guidelines, we are concerned these programs will be insufficient to meet the needs of New Jersey residents struggling to rebuild. We urge you to make available

additional support from Community Development Block Grants to help relieve the financial burden of elevating and rebuilding homes to new standards.

We look forward to working with you to help suffering New Jersey residents rebuild. Thank you for considering this request.

Sincerely,

  
FRANK R. LAUTENBERG

  
ROBERT MENENDEZ

Cc: Craig Fugate, Administrator, FEMA