

DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING CDBG-DR PROGRAM  
SAN JUAN, PUERTO RICO

RE:

FIRST ACTION PLAN AMENDMENT  
(SUBSTANTIAL) \* FOR THE 2019-  
2020 EARTHQUAKES AND 2020  
TROPICAL STORM \* ISAÍAS RESPONSE  
UNDER CDBG-DR FUNDS \*

\*\*\*\*\*

PUBLIC HEARING

DATE : December 9, 2022

TIME : 10:20 a.m.

CLIENT : DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING CDBG-DR PROGRAM

ADDRESS : 606 Barbosa Avenue, 8th Floor  
SAN JUAN, PUERTO RICO

HELD IN : Barrio Playa Community Center  
Guayanilla, Puerto Rico PARTICIPANTS

MODERATOR :

Mrs. Maricarmen Figueroa Correa

PRESIDING TABLE:

Mrs. Marivette Cabeza Díaz -	Associate Secretary for Disaster Recovery
Mr. Christian Pagán -	Associate Secretary for Disaster Recovery
Mr. Oscar Colón -	Associate Secretary for Disaster Recovery
Mr. Carlos Olmedo Álvarez -	Planner and Assistant Secretary of Planning
Mr. Raúl Rivera Rodríguez -	Mayor of Guayanilla
Mr. José H. Rivera Madera -	District 23 Representative

1 STENOGRAPHER:

2 Mr. Daniel Figueroa Sanabria

3 OTHER PARTICIPANT:

4 Ms. Alicia Díaz Santiago - Center for

5 Habitat

6 Reconstruction

7 \* \* \*

8 The procedures were carried out in accordance with

9 the following transcript.

10 \* \* \*

11 MRS. MODERATOR:

12 Well. A very good morning to you. Greetings

13 everyone. We are very, very excited and very

14 happy to be here in the Municipality of Guayanilla,

15 where we have been received with so, much warmth, and with a

16 full house, Mayor. So, this is what it's all about, to have

17 this type of activity for citizen engagement, of being able to

18 to have these dialogues and approaches with the communities.

19 So, we thank you all this morning for having created this

20 space to be with us.

21 We are precisely here, and I welcome you

22 officially to the public hearing of the First Action Plan

23 Amendment Substantial for the

1 2019-2020 Earthquakes and the 2020 Tropical Storm  
2 Isaias Response under CDBG-DR funds for  
3 the Puerto Rico Department of Housing.  
4 the needs of the affected residents in the  
5 municipalities of Guánica, Guayanilla, Lajas, Mayagüez,  
6 Peñuelas, Ponce, and Yauco. My name is Maricarmen  
7 Figueroa. I am the assistant secretary for the Federal  
8 Compliance - Subrecipient Management Division and today,  
9 Friday, December 9, 2022, at 10:25 a.m. in the  
10 morning, I will serve as your moderator from this space, the  
11 Barrio Playa Community Center, in Guayanilla.  
12 We are pleased to notify you that we have the assistance of a  
13 translator for the English language and a sign  
14 language interpreter, for the benefit of the community that  
15 would need it. We thank all of you for your presence during  
16 this morning, and in addition, we have the presence of the  
17 Department of Housing's staff for the CBDG-DR Funds.  
18 First of all, I would like to highlight Marivette Cabeza Díaz,  
19 who is the Associate Secretary for Disaster Recovery, the  
20 Public and Community Affairs Division.  
21 Also, Mr. Christian Pagán, who is the  
22 Associate Secretary for Disaster Recovery for the  
23 Public and Community Affairs Division, to Mr.  
24 Oscar Colón, who is the Associate Secretary for Disaster  
25 Recovery, Public and Community Affairs Division,

1 to planner Carlos Olmedo Álvarez, who is the Assistant Secretary  
2 of Planning and, of course, to our  
3 mayor, the Honorable Raúl Rivera Rodríguez and to our  
4 representative of District 23, José H. Rivera Madera.  
5 Thank you very much for welcoming us this  
6 morning, for being our hosts and being committed to the  
7 recovery of Guayanilla and the entire Southern Area, following  
8 the earthquakes of 2019 and 2020. Very good. Well, now, I'm  
9 going to let the mayor give us a greeting, as well as the  
10 representative, to give us a brief greeting before we  
11 start work.

12 MAYOR RAÚL RIVERA:

13 Thank you very much. Many blessings. I am grateful to  
14 the Department of Housing's entire staff, and its  
15 secretary, for the opportunity you have given us this  
16 morning. I call this morning a historic one,  
17 where we are, because I think crawling, we're already  
18 crawling. We had a process of, of gestation, which lasted  
19 for three years, since the passage of... the impact. Not the  
20 impact of the earthquake on January 7,  
21 2020 and I believe that we are finally seeing the light at  
22 the end of the tunnel.

23 For me, today is one of the most important and most  
24 special days to me since we are going to see results. The wait  
25 is already over, that, that, that the tremors have passed.

1 No, no... We are talking about many millions. We are talking  
2 about many ideas. We talk about a lot of changes, but,  
3 well, what the people really want to see is  
4 action. We did have a budget that was quite  
5 substantial that can help us to recover, I think  
6 that, that the start and the conclusion of, of which was the  
7 sequel of the earthquakes in 2020, 2021 and today, in 2022,  
8 at the end, we still feel... still feel the  
9 presence of, of, of earthquakes in our area.  
10 So, I would like to thank the task force, our  
11 director, Nannette Chacón, who is with us,  
12 our... to the deputy mayor, our administrator,  
13 our colleague Carlos Cintrón, our special assistant, Eddie  
14 Echevarría and the entire task force of the municipality of  
15 Guayanilla, which are also over there, because I also  
16 want you to be a part of this activity So, that you can have  
17 awareness and be the spokespersons for carrying  
18 the right message, not the wrong message, but the  
19 right message of how we are going to be operating  
20 as of January.  
21 I would like you to not leave with doubts today. I  
22 would like you to explain today, "Look, I have a  
23 house that was destroyed partially or totally  
24 on January 7, 2009, and I do not have the property title  
25 or I have the property title, the insurance paid me, FEMA

1 gave me this. How can I participate in this project?"  
2 I want you to ask, "Look, the municipality demolished  
3 my house. Nothing has happened yet. Can I  
4 aspire to these funds?"  
5 What I want is for you to leave today with a  
6 picture and a vision of what the project is going to be. That's  
7 why it takes... The seven municipalities have taken the  
8 initiative that, that our moderator spoke of, of, of making  
9 a, a syndicate. And you will say, "What is a syndicate?  
10 Why a syndicate?" Because if there are seven of us  
11 municipalities, seven municipalities that make a bureaucratic  
12 staging together, just one, we don't have to make seven  
13 bureaucratic stages. What we want to do is move forward the  
14 process. We want to maximize resources. We want you to,  
15 well, well receive support. Not to be told,  
16 "We have this much or we want this much." No, that you receive  
17 assistance and you can enter your home.  
18 I know of people who on January 7, 2009 had  
19 to abandon their home. Now, on January 7, 2023,  
20 they've been out of their homes for three years, where they  
21 still pay the mortgage, they pay for water, electricity,  
22 telephone, they pay a separate rent, outside of Guayanilla and  
23 what they want... is to return home. That's what I'm  
24 interested in, that we can go back to being what we were before  
25 the hurricane and be more resilient and be more resistant to

1 these impacts of nature. I think that everything  
2 that comes from God, we must accept it. Everything that  
3 comes from nature, we must accept it, but  
4 we have to be stronger, to be resilient and above all,  
5 accept the will of the Almighty.  
6 So, once again, we thank the entire,  
7 wonderful team of the Department of Housing, which has  
8 been... that has been a friend of Guayanilla since the  
9 beginning of when I started this process. We knocked on that  
10 door and it... quickly opened. Mister Pagán, always grateful.  
11 Olmedo, I'm grateful. All of you. I can't mention a few  
12 more, and others less. More than thankful that, that they are  
13 here, with us, and that they have done what they are  
14 doing for our people. So, again,  
15 welcome to Guayanilla, Land of the Brave, the place of the  
16 epicenter. So, let's move forward. May God  
17 bless you.

18 I would like to take this opportunity to give the floor to  
19 our representative and our colleague José, Cheíto, Madera.  
20 Rivera Madera, right? Rivera Madera, Rivera Madera.

21 REPRESENTATIVE JOSÉ RIVERA:

22 Thank you very much, mayor. Thank you for the invitation  
23 and thanks to all the staff members of the Department of the  
24 Housing that are here today. And good  
25 morning to all of you. This is a very important meeting.

1 See it more as a business meeting. Don't be afraid  
2 to ask the necessary questions as the mayor rightly says,  
3 because that's what they are here for  
4 during the course of the day.

5 It has been a tough five years. From Maria to here,  
6 I, I, I, I make this as a joke, but I shouldn't even  
7 make it a joke, but, really, I think that  
8 the only thing Guayanilla is missing is a forest  
9 fire, because we have had earthquakes, a pandemic,  
10 hurricanes, and I'm not talking about the forest fire too  
11 loudly, because we have a dry forest, right nearby. So, no...  
12 But, really, they have been days, they have been very tough  
13 years, where we have not only had losses in the physical and  
14 in the structural matter, but also a... a socio-economic  
15 and psycho-social problem that has been formed in the, in  
16 the general public with, with, indeed, with nuances  
17 of hopelessness sometimes, because, well they don't see that  
18 their houses...

19 That the house that has come from, from their entire life's  
20 sacrifice fell in a moment. They do not see that the matter is  
21 moving. They have... This whole area has had this serious  
22 problem of property titles, you know? Probably,  
23 more accentuated than in other places, including, for  
24 example, part of my representative district in El Tuque,  
25 that that project there... that problem there is gigantic and,



1 and it has been planted, right, or was... or has been born  
2 within, within the, in the, in the community, in the  
3 municipalities I have been visiting, that, that feeling of  
4 what's going to happen, right. And I believe that meetings  
5 like these are very important and that's why I want to greet  
6 you before giving a, a small deposition, greet you and ask  
7 all of you to, to not hide anything you are  
8 feeling today. They are here to listen and everyone  
9 knows that the, the home is every, every human being's  
10 palace, right, and, probably, it's the most  
11 important or, or the most important aspiration we have.  
12 We are born and we live in a place where the  
13 first thing that your parents teach you is that the most  
14 important thing is to have a roof over your head, that you  
15 have to work to provide your family that safe roof that  
16 after working for So, many years to make it happen....  
17 to be able to achieve that with a lot of sacrifice, in an  
18 area that is as economically depressed as the one, the one  
19 that is ours, to lose our homes, well, it's a, it's a  
20 huge shock.

21 So, let's... So, let's seize the day. You  
22 are going through hard times. Let the officials  
23 know, that's what they are here for. Let me  
24 know, even though we have spoken on countless occasions, to the  
25 mayor. I am vice-chairman of the Treasury

1 Commission... of the Hou... of the Housing Commission of the  
2 House of Representatives and we have touched on these issues for  
3 a long, right, for a long time, but we will continue to do so  
4 until, until we make it. And so. I... Again,  
5 thank you very much for the invitation, mayor, and to all  
6 of you, to all the officials of the municipality and  
7 we will continue talking about it later. Good morning.

8 MRS. MODERATOR:

9 Thank you to the mayor and thank you to the representative for  
10 this and for the commitment they have with the recovery of  
11 Guayanilla and the entire Southern Area, along with the rest of  
12 the municipalities. Very good. So, the Department of  
13 Housing convened for today, Friday, December 9,  
14 2022, this public hearing, with the purpose of hearing  
15 comments and/or suggestions from the affected residents  
16 in the municipalities of Guánica, Guayanilla, Lajas, Mayagüez,  
17 Peñuelas, Ponce and Yauco, as well as the general public.  
18 This hearing is part of the federal injunction and  
19 of the citizen engagement process to receive  
20 comments about the first amendment to this action  
21 plan. This includes unmet needs following  
22 the passage of Tropical Storm Isaias, a new  
23 needs assessment for the use of the  
24 mitigation funds and data on public disclosure  
25 efforts and the engagement of interested entities

1 entities, following the publication of the original action  
2 plan. They should know that the original action plan  
3 remains available for review by the general public  
4 on our website, [www.cdbg-dr.pr.gov](http://www.cdbg-dr.pr.gov). The  
5 days of November 18 and 29 the public view notices  
6 were published in the El Nuevo Día newspaper, on pages  
7 45 and 29, respectively, as required by the  
8 regulation.

9 Please be advised that this hearing is being audio  
10 recorded and, subsequently, will be published in our YouTube  
11 channel, at CDBGDR Puerto Rico. The period of  
12 acceptance of public comments for this amendment has  
13 been available since November 4 and has been  
14 extended, following that application to HUD, until the 31st  
15 of December 2022. You can visit our website,  
16 [cdgb-dr.pr.gov](http://cdgb-dr.pr.gov) to read the first amendment and submit your  
17 comments through the online form or by email,  
18 [infocdbg@vivienda.pr.gov](mailto:infocdbg@vivienda.pr.gov).

19 You can also send them by mail to PO BOX  
20 21365, San Juan, Puerto Rico, 00928-1365, and today  
21 we also have paper forms available, which you can pass  
22 by the, by the registration desk and have your form on  
23 paper, live and in full color, and leave your comment.  
24 This option is also available. So, let's move on now  
25 to the Rules for the Public Hearing. In order to guarantee the

1 processes this morning, we want to establish the  
2 following rules for a healthy compilation of  
3 comments for this action plan. You must have  
4 registered at the entrance to deposit and/or express your  
5 interest during the hearing.  
6 Turns will be given on a first-come, first-served basis.  
7 Each speaker will be given a five-minute turn.  
8 This turn is non-transferable to any speaker... to another  
9 speaker, I should say. Before speaking, you must  
10 identify yourself for registration purposes. Please indicate  
11 your name, town of origin and/or the entity to which you  
12 belong to. The proposal should be on topics related to  
13 to the First Action Plan Amendment Substantial for  
14 the 2019, 2020 Earthquakes and the 2020 Tropical  
15 Storm Isaias Response under CDBG-DR Funds.  
16 Each speaker must respect the others turns  
17 and must also maintain silence during the public hearing. The  
18 moderator will indicate when it will be your turn and  
19 all persons who are participating in this public  
20 viewing should promote an environment of respect, as  
21 we know this will be. Very good. Well then, let  
22 us begin, precisely, with the presentation from representative  
23 Rivera Madera. Yes. All yours.  
24 REPRESENTATIVE JOSÉ RIVERA:  
25 Thank you. I promise it will be short. Good

1 morning again. Again, thank you all for being here.  
2 My name is José Humberto Rivera Madera. For you,  
3 Cheíto Rivera, since most of you don't know me  
4 by José Humberto and I am the representative of District  
5 Number 23, which includes the towns of Guayanilla, Peñuelas,  
6 the town, the urban center of Yauco and western Ponce.  
7 My participation today will be short and in total support of  
8 The mayors who are working hard to achieve the  
9 rehabilitation and reconstruction of these municipalities.  
10 Well, I tell you that District 23 has been shaken violently  
11 by, by... during these years, by natural events.  
12 During the last five years Hurricane Maria,  
13 earthquakes, a pandemic, and Hurricane Fiona have been  
14 disastrous for our infrastructure and economy.  
15 Unfortunately, and because of governmental bureaucracy, the  
16 physical reconstruction process has been slow. This has  
17 provo... This has caused that, at the same time, the process of  
18 socio-economic rehabilitation in our municipalities be  
19 slow as well. Schools, small businesses, residences,  
20 churches and other components of our social ecosystem  
21 have been affected.  
22 We, the Legislative Assembly of Puerto Rico, have conducted  
23 public hearings on the reconstruction plans for the  
24 Government. I have participated, as vice-president of the  
25 Housing Commission. We have been very attentive to the

1 process. My contribution today, as I said before, is  
2 of support to the mayors and the newly formed consortium  
3 between municipalities in my district, part of the  
4 municipalities in my district, to work on the issue of  
5 reconstruction, the COSUR Consortium (sic). It is the  
6 municipalities that are called upon to work firsthand with  
7 this process. My recommendation to the Department of Housing  
8 is that the...the more that can be done and as often as  
9 possible, the auctions, fund management, first-hand  
10 decisions should hold up by the municipalities and not by  
11 the central government, which is, by its nature and by its  
12 size, slower, it is more costly and more bureaucratic.  
13 The cash packages for the projects continue  
14 to be a problem for the municipalities. Disbursement  
15 projects and auctions continue to be a  
16 problem for municipalities and other similar issues  
17 make the process much more difficult. I want to  
18 make a parenthesis here to talk about the issue that I know  
19 does not have to do with PRDOH, but I want to  
20 broach it, because one, it is a symbiotic activity, that one  
21 affects the other and it is the constant problem of the  
22 schools. Guayanilla has lost, as the Mayor said yesterday,  
23 about 4 thousand citizens. So, long as the  
24 schools remain unsettled within the largest  
25 communities in the, in the municipality, just as it happened in

1 Yauco, we are going to continue seeing our citizens emigrating  
2 and leaving the town, looking, not only for a better  
3 opportunity or a home for them, but also seeking education  
4 for our children. What is going on with the schools? The school  
5 closed, the grocery store next door closed, further on the  
6 man who sold hot dogs closed, the man.... later,  
7 the little sandwich truck and it keeps depopulating,  
8 right.

9 Therefore, at one point in time, all the communities  
10 had a, a school, didn't they? Or, at least, a  
11 structure to give classes, because all the social a...  
12 activities revolved around the school within that  
13 community. So, it's important that we take that into  
14 consideration. Since I told you I wasn't going to... to take  
15 too much time, I would like to finish by emphasizing for the  
16 third time in this deposition that the most important thing and  
17 my biggest recommendation or my major contribution and, and, as  
18 I have said at the previous public hearings, the municipalities  
19 are very important.

20 Municipalities are the first response. They are the ones who  
21 are there all the time and they are where all these people  
22 who are here when they have a need go to  
23 first. So, I hope COSUR is given the necessary  
24 importance, that they are given the necessary process...  
25 processes in order to be able to work, that they are also

1 given the money to be able to work. I am one of those who  
2 think that if more money had been granted from the beginning  
3 to the municipalities or more permits would have been  
4 granted to the municipalities in order to be able to do  
5 other things that the government, that, again, is more  
6 expensive and slower by nature, this would have run  
7 differently and, perhaps, we would not have so many  
8 problems. Thanks... I would like to end by thanking again  
9 the Department of Housing for being here. It is a very  
10 important step and to you, keep asking questions and, and  
11 don't leave here today with any doubts. Thank you. I didn't  
12 exceed the five minutes, did I?

13 MRS. MODERATOR:

14 No, you did not exceed five minutes, representative. We thank  
15 you for following the rules. Well. We appreciate the  
16 representative's expressions that always contribute to the  
17 discussion and dialogue that must be held and that the  
18 Department of Housing's staff takes away, right, to  
19 continue strengthening the recovery processes. Very  
20 well. So, now it's Ms.

21 Alicia Díaz's turn, who is visiting us from the Center  
22 for Habitat Reconstruction.

23 MS. ALICIA DIAZ:

24 Good morning to everyone. My name is Alicia  
25 Díaz Santiago and I am representing the Center for



1 Habitat Reconstruction or CRH. Briefly, I am going to  
2 describe to you a little bit So, that you know the context of  
3 why I am here. CRH was founded five years ago. We are  
4 on our anniversary right now and we have collaborative  
5 agreements with municipalities, where we help them with their  
6 public nuisance programs. Currently, we  
7 are looking at the problem of public nuisances as  
8 a solution to the affordable housing problem we are facing  
9 right now in Puerto Rico.

10 In response to this awareness we have, comes the  
11 presentation I have today. We have  
12 four remarks. I will be quite brief, right,  
13 but if you have any doubts or questions you can ask me  
14 now or ask me later. The first  
15 remark that we have is that the program is right now  
16 has... Oh, bring it closer to me? Oh! Sorry. Right  
17 now, the program, as it is designed, allows you to  
18 choose to relocate, right, buy a  
19 new house if the property you now own  
20 has damage of more than \$60,000, but it does  
21 not say anything about what is going to be done with that  
22 property once the person leaves that, that house.  
23 We are concerned because we think that once the property  
24 is abandoned and you move to another house, that house  
25 can become a public nuisance, increasing the

1 number, right, that Guayanilla or the other towns may have  
2 that are also being affec... were also affected by  
3 earthquakes and by Isaias, from, from having larger  
4 properties that are causing a problem for the community.  
5 Our second... our second finding is that they  
6 are also not being... the properties are not being given  
7 importance as, as a solution to the problem.  
8 The, the plan, right now, as it is drafted, does not  
9 say if you can go and buy properties that are  
10 considered to be public nuisances and under... Again?  
11 Oh, forgive me. Okay. But did you understand the first  
12 finding what, what did I say? Did you hear that right? Okay.  
13 Well the second one, I will repeat it, is that the plan, right  
14 now, as it is written, does not say whether properties  
15 can be bou... whether properties that are considered public  
16 nuisances can be bought with that voucher, and we understand  
17 that in order to, right, help the solution to the public  
18 nuisance problem should be to include language that allows you  
19 to purchase with that voucher a property that is considered a  
20 public nuisance. We know that public nuisances often have  
21 a lower price than the market. So, you can take advantage of  
22 of, of that. We understand that these vouchers may have a  
23 portion to purchase the property and another portion to  
24 purchase the property that is meant to be fixed and in this  
25 way, you acquire these properties. Point number 3, is that

1 there should also be a... there should be a, a type of direct  
2 assistance for municipalities with the public nuisance  
3 program. There are many municipalities that have their own  
4 public nuisance programs, but they do not have the personnel,  
5 or, perhaps, they don't have the allocated amount they need to  
6 run the program.

7 De-, de-... right... Declaring a property as  
8 a public nuisance has to go through a, right, due  
9 process, which is provided for in the Municipal Code and  
10 to be able to follow it up, staff is needed and, obviously,  
11 well, we know that the municipalities are financially strapped,  
12 that, perhaps, financial assistance for them could help  
13 them run that program and then, you will  
14 have options to be able to purchase those properties that  
15 are abandoned right now. And the third...

16 Forgive me, the fourth, is that these vouchers can be  
17 used in auctions.

18 We have a lot of auctions occurring right  
19 now with properties at, at a lower price than the  
20 market, but people can't go with those vouchers to  
21 buy properties at auctions. So, we also thought  
22 that this should be considered by the action plan. That  
23 is all. I have it here, the presentation in writing, which  
24 I can leave it here and yeah. That is all. Thank you.

25

1 MRS. MODERATOR:

2 Many thanks to Ms. Alicia Diaz, from the  
3 Center for Habitat Reconstruction, for these  
4 suggestions, comments on how to continue looking for  
5 alternatives and solutions to... in this process of  
6 recovery and continue to strengthen the plans,  
7 right. Very good. At this time, we have no one  
8 else officially registered to make a, a presentation,  
9 but we would like to invite anyone who wants to make  
10 a presentation or express any suggestions, since even  
11 if you have not registered, you have the time to do so.  
12 now.

13 Also, reminding you that, in writing, we have...

14 Yes. We also have, we also have in writing the opportunity  
15 for people to leave their comments and their  
16 suggestions through a form that we have at the  
17 registration desk. Very good. Well, while someone decides  
18 to come up, I will then introduce planner Carlos  
19 Olmedo, who is going to give us a presentation, precisely,  
20 on what this grant is about, this project, CONSUR  
21 and all the other elements that compose it.

22 MRS. KATHERINE.

23 Greetings. Good morning, everyone. If any of the  
24 sign language people could stand up here, up front, to  
25 to see if anyone needs a sign language interpreter and

1 can't see them because their backs are turned. Does anyone  
2 need an interpreter right now So, that you could  
3 raise your hand? No? No? Perfect. All right.

4 Thank you. We continue with the presentation.

5 PLANNER CARLOS OLMEDO:

6 No, no. They can pass. It's in case I could see if anyone was  
7 there. Can you hear me? Hello. Good morning, everyone. I'm  
8 going to, to give a summary about what is... has been the  
9 process of, of these funds, both from the, the approval of the  
10 first action plan, as well as the proposal of the second action  
11 plan, which is what we are presenting today, and

12 what they are intended to do. This, this  
13 grant, specifically, this allocation of funds is  
14 due to the seismic events that began in 2019.

15 The major events happened during that 2019 and 2020  
16 Christmas period. They still continue. A few  
17 days ago, we were here, in Ponce and... in Ponce, at night  
18 at... during the early the morning, we had... we felt the  
19 movement. You can't hear anything? I'll speak...

20 Maybe, it's that this has a... Here? Like this?

21 Okay. Like this. OK. I'm bad at this. One year, one year  
22 after the events, what is known as the Federal Register  
23 is published and this res... this is in response... This is  
24 published by the Department of Housing and Urban Development,  
25 HUD, and it is in response to a special law prepared by

1 Congress, which Congress approves to grant funds. I'm  
2 stopping here for a moment because many people mention,  
3 well, that the 'CDBG-DR', 'CDBG-MIT' Funds, are well, a bit  
4 slow. Yes, that is the design of the funds, because they  
5 come from HUD, from the Department of Housing and Urban  
6 Development. They are not FEMA, and they are not emergency  
7 funds. These are not funds to manage disasters. As events  
8 occur, the, the emergency occurs, and FEMA comes in with  
9 these funds that they already have at the ready for this  
10 purpose throughout the year. SBA enters, Rural Development  
11 enters, other agencies that serve this... that, that they  
12 have the capacity, don't they? And the authorization to aid  
13 these emergencies. Once that happens, the appraisal and damage  
14 assessment begins and those damages are... those damages are  
15 assessed and the amount of funding that... the amount these  
16 different agencies gave is assessed and an analysis is made of  
17 the funds needed for the recovery and the funds that  
18 each agency gave and that's how you get there... That  
19 difference between what was needed and what was given, they're  
20 considered unmet needs, and on top of those  
21 unmet needs, Congress approves a special  
22 law and in that special law funds are granted to HUD and  
23 then HUD gives these funds to the jurisdictions.  
24 Therefore, we have to wait for the whole process to  
25 pass for the CDBG money to come in, either from RD or from

1 Mitigation. So, yes, we enter one, two  
2 years after the events occur, when FEMA has already  
3 granted the funds, right, and what is going to be granted and  
4 whatnot, what funds, what will be helped and what not is all  
5 decided. And we are not an emergency management fund, nor do we  
6 manage... nor manage disasters. We are a medium and  
7 long-term recovery fund. That is why  
8 we entered this process.

9 On that... on this occasion, in two thousand... in 2021,  
10 36 million dollars were awarded and that's... that was  
11 taken for the approval of the first plan of action, which is  
12 currently in effect, to handle household recoveries.

13 So, far, the funds only allow for household  
14 recovery, not businesses, and the SR2 Program was created, but  
15 since the events have continued and more have been... we  
16 received more and more... more information about the damages  
17 there were and we realized that the need was greater than what  
18 was projected for funds, it generates a new Federal  
19 Register, a new allocation, which is the one we are going to  
20 discuss today.

21 On that occasion, those 36 million dollars, the  
22 Federal Register said that it had to be spent... oh, not  
23 spend. 81 percent of the funds had to be used  
24 in four municipalities, and these four municipalities were  
25 the ones who received the... the, the first grant, which are

1 Guánica, Yauco, Guayanilla and Ponce. In essence, therefore,  
2 all the, all the money was used. I don't know who... I don't  
3 know... It was decided not to include another juris...  
4 other... other jurisdictions, other, other municipalities,  
5 because they were some lower amounts of, of money. When this  
6 year arrives the second Federal Register, where they then  
7 grant an additional 184 million dollars and they show us  
8 some new damages that were not previously reported, as in,  
9 that FEMA reports and then, from there, we go work  
10 on this new... plan of action to distribute these  
11 funds.

12 MAYOR RAÚL RIVERA:

13 Young man, forgive me for bothering you and forgive me for  
14 not... because it's not my style, but so, So, that they have  
15 visibility, right, the, the, the colleagues that are here,  
16 from that first allocation of funds that was \$36 million,  
17 but it was for four, for four municipalities? In other words,  
18 it's not that Guayanilla was allocated \$36 million  
19 total in that first, right, allocation on January  
20 6, 2021. Of that one, of those... of those four  
21 municipalities, we were the third most allocated  
22 municipality, almost similarly to Ponce. The municipality with  
23 the highest allocation was Guánica. Subsequently, Yauco,  
24 Guayanilla and, finally, Ponce. That was the first  
25 initial allocation.



1 He is now talking about a new allocation which is  
2 184 million dollars, which, which is another, second...  
3 the other, second round, as we say, but there,  
4 the municipality of Peñuelas was added, which was not in  
5 the first, the municipality of Lajas and Mayagüez are added,  
6 of those... So, that they have visibility for it, because,  
7 sometimes, we talk about many millions and no, no, no in  
8 essence, that first assignment was for our  
9 municipality, but it was for four municipalities. Sorry,  
10 Olmedo, do you know?

11 PLANNER CARLOS OLMEDO:

12 No. Very good. And now, I'm going to show you a  
13 chart with the... all the millions distributed, which is  
14 the same thing that the mayor is explaining, but a little bit  
15 more detailed So, that you can see it. So, 184  
16 million were approved. The... This was...

17 MRS. MODERATOR:

18 Mayor, let's go. Go take a look.

19 PLANNER CARLOS OLMEDO:

20 Does this one work? Ah, this one works better. Okay.  
21 I think, I don't know. Yes? OK. The municipality of Mayagüez  
22 that the mayor mentions, is going to receive funds, not because  
23 of the earthquakes, but because of Tropical Storm Isaias. They  
24 had some flooding from the tropical storm and there is  
25 a... what they call a 'set aside,' which is a separate

1 fund, where 7 million dollars will be granted to them  
2 and I will explain a little bit more now. So, this Federal  
3 Register is the one we are discussing, and causes the  
4 amendment to the action plan. We will include this money to  
5 the totality of the funds we have, the 36 million  
6 we have approved.

7 So, now, as the mayor rightly mentioned,  
8 we had the original four, which is Guánica, Yauco,  
9 Guayanilla and Ponce. We now include Lajas and Peñuelas for  
10 earthquakes and for Tropical Storm Isaias, the  
11 municipality of Mayagüez. This is how they will be distributed.  
12 In those... in those jurisdictions they will be distributed.  
13 We have the original \$36 million from the first action  
14 plan that has already been approved. We have the 184 that we  
15 are discussing right now. So, in total there are 221 million.  
16 From these, a little more than 7 million are for Mayagüez.  
17 The... The remaining money will be used in the southern  
18 region, in the six municipalities we talked about from the  
19 southern region for household repairs.

20 Okay. CONSUR is created. CONSUR is the consortium of the  
21 south. It is an organization among the six municipalities to  
22 to address the situation of the, the reconstruction. This is  
23 something new. CDBG-DR, to date, in no... had not  
24 granted funds to the municipalities to work  
25 directly with projects of private individuals. The

1 municipalities do manage money for public infrastructure,  
2 public infrastructure project work, but this  
3 is the first time it is being done, isn't it, this  
4 granting of funds, So, that the municipalities will be able  
5 to directly help private homes and the municipalities  
6 joined forces So, as not to compete with the same  
7 municipalities for the same resources, with the same  
8 contractors, for projects and other things. They joined and  
9 made this consortium and this consortium is going to be the  
10 manager, right? The administrator of those funds for the  
11 entire southern region, the six municipalities of the southern  
12 region. So, they are going to manage what is the home repair,  
13 repair, reconstruction and  
14 household relocation project. Here we are. Here, here,  
15 here. OK. This is the little chart that the mayor was  
16 mentioning. We create the... We started to make some  
17 modifications to the original action plan. We are  
18 adding 184 million to what was originally intended, and  
19 we are addressing additional concerns from the  
20 mayors. Among these, the creation of, of CONSUR.  
21 Previously, they had asked to have more  
22 participation. Housing was not something we did, but since  
23 more money came in, we can work with that and CONSUR is  
24 created. Apart from creating CONSUR, an R is added to the  
25 program. Originally, there were two R's, which was repair

1 and reconstruction. Now, relocation is added to it, which  
2 was going to be previously worked directly by PRDOH  
3 through a program to mitigate. Now, this program  
4 will allow individual or community property relocations  
5 to be carried out.

6 And funds are reallocated, they're redistributed.

7 Originally, Lajas and Peñuelas were not included and  
8 CONSUR's management was not in the, in the, in the original  
9 ac... action plan. Now, we are taking in this  
10 allocation and we are redistributing So, that  
11 Lajas and Peñuelas can enter the process from the  
12 beginning, because otherwise, Lajas and Peñuelas would have to  
13 start the process a little further down the road. Um... So  
14 this distribution of funds, which this one doesn't really  
15 matter, let's talk about this one, which is the important one,  
16 because that's the one we're going to start and work  
17 with.

18 This is from where... this is from each one of the  
19 allocations, how we got here. So, we are going to  
20 talk about this. This distribution of funds is  
21 related to the damages reported by FEMA, the damages that  
22 fall in each municipality reported by FEMA. We have  
23 municipalities that had less quantity... had houses  
24 with a lot of damage, many... There were houses that were  
25 heavily affected, houses that cannot be lived in, but they were

1 fewer houses and we have municipalities with houses... many  
2 more houses that had less damage. Then, an  
3 analysis is done about how much does each repair ...  
4 repair, relocation and So, on costs for each one of them and  
5 from there come some percentages that were already given by  
6 FEMA and from those percentages these funds are granted.  
7 All the money is allocated, except for the one in  
8 green, in essence it's for CONSUR. It is for the southern  
9 region, for the four munici... the six municipalities. We have  
10 this distribution among the municipalities. The CONSUR  
11 management, this is the money that CONSUR is going to use for  
12 renting... renting offices, payment of, of  
13 equipment, materials, employees and all the events that I am  
14 going to explain to you now, the events that are going to take  
15 place to visit the different municipalities, collect the  
16 information and bring the information of those, of those  
17 affected and process it and all that. The entirety of what  
18 management is during the duration of the program.  
19 In the case of Mayagüez, I had mentioned that there are  
20 about 7 million dollars, 7.3 million dollars, which  
21 is to address the situation of the, of the flo... of  
22 the flooding caused by, by Tropical Storm  
23 Isaias. No, we didn't get into what... in this, in  
24 this amendment, of what we are going to be working with  
25 Mayagüez, because we are still working on some details

1 from Mayagüez and we didn't want to wait for Mayagüez to  
2 present everything. So, we decided, "We're going to start with  
3 the earthquakes, we start with earthquakes and  
4 then, then we do... I think I'm going too fast. "And  
5 then, we make another amendment, if necessary,  
6 to explain a little better what Mayagüez is all about," but  
7 household repairs will be made in Mayagüez.  
8 This mitigation thing is for specific projects.... They are  
9 funds for specific mitigation projects in  
10 the affected properties or communities. So, it is  
11 associated... The thing is that it's a full jar.  
12 You can see it like this. It is a \$28 million jar for the  
13 six municipalities, but it continues, it continues to remain  
14 within the six municipalities. The administrative part, that is  
15 the money PRDOH uses to pay the staff that will be  
16 managing from PRDOH, managing what the program is.  
17 As the program continues to run, the  
18 surpluses from here and the surpluses from here are then  
19 reinvested in the municipalities. In other words, this is how  
20 it happens in all CDBG-DR programs. And this is the total that  
21 we have. OK? So, I am going to explain a little bit more  
22 about the program. The program will make it possible to repair  
23 damaged homes or rebuild homes and re... relocation  
24 as well. It will be... It will be managed by CONSUR.  
25 CONSUR is our subrecipient. In this regard, the

1 Department of Housing received the money from HUD and  
2 signed a contract with CONSUR, which has already been signed,  
3 So, that CONSUR can be the administrator of these funds.  
4 So, we, the Department of Housing, will  
5 not be in the six municipalities of the southern area. It will  
6 be CONSUR who will have its own representatives and its own  
7 activities. We are going to come with them, but it is  
8 CONSUR who will be attending the, the, the  
9 applications from you and everything else and CONSUR is, right,  
10 as it is meant, since there are... the six mayors are  
11 part of CONSUR's board of directors. They have an executive  
12 director and staff and So, on.

13 How is this going to be done? The maximum allowance to be  
14 allocated will be 60 thousand for rehabilitation. This...  
15 Rehabilitation is fixing something in the house that went  
16 wrong. If it... if it requires reconstruction, including the  
17 demolition of... the demolition of the affected area and the  
18 reconstruction of that area of the house, then they have up to  
19 185 thousand dollars. More than that, because, probably, the  
20 house is either mostly destroyed or cannot be used. There are  
21 265 thousand dollars for the reconstruction of the house,  
22 including the demolition, plus elevation, if the, the house is  
23 to be elevated.

24 Elevation has nothing to do with earthquakes,  
25 but if we are in an area that needs to have a house

1 rebuilt, if we have a case where we have to rebuild a  
2 house and that house is in a flood-prone area, which can be  
3 elevated the, the property and the removal from the flood  
4 area, it will be done. So, let's also...  
5 See? That is the... To mitigate that other, that other existing  
6 danger on the property. So, we have these three  
7 options.

8 MAYOR RAÚL RIVERA:

9 Olmedo, when you talk about 60 thousand dollars for  
10 rehabilitating a house, does that means that we are going to  
11 be giving the money to the person?

12 PLANNER CARLOS OLMEDO:

13 No. Through CONSUR the program is being... planners  
14 will be hired, contractors who are going to  
15 make the home repairs, repairs,  
16 reconstructions and other things. The person receives the full  
17 service.

18 MAYOR RAÚL RIVERA:

19 In other words, once the qualified person, once the  
20 qualified person...

21 UNIDENTIFIED RESIDENT:

22 May I ask a question?

23 PLANNER CARLOS OLMEDO:

24 Right away. Give me a second.

25



1 MAYOR RAÚL RIVERA:

2 Yes. Once the qualified person, for example,  
3 returns and qualifies, qualifies for, for the, for the,  
4 right, for the help, the person qualified, delivered everything  
5 and then CONSUR, well, with the contractors, goes and  
6 rehabilitates that house? Right?

7 PLANNER CARLOS OLMEDO:

8 Correct.

9 MAYOR RAÚL RIVERA:

10 And in case the house doesn't, it's no good, right, that the  
11 house, well, it became unfit, we give him the money?

12 PLANNER CARLOS OLMEDO:

13 No. We do not give money. No money is given  
14 to the people. When the... the, the moment for  
15 relocation... Yes, if the house can be repaired, it will  
16 be repaired. If the house is in a... in a situation that  
17 cannot be repaired and has to be made, rebuilt  
18 the, the... right, a, a new house is made. It is possible to  
19 to build a new house on the same lot. If it is one of those  
20 situations where the lot can't be... we can't  
21 build in that lot, because the lot sunk, because  
22 it's in an area... even though the lot hasn't sunk, it is  
23 in a flood-prone area, right, the kind where... we're not  
24 allowed to reconstruct and we need to relocate the  
25 property, well there are, there are several options for

1 relocation.

2 There is the voucher option, which is... which, which  
3 the madam mentioned just now. There is the option of  
4 identifying how... There is going to be, some repair...  
5 housing construction in specific areas, the  
6 person is moved to that area and it's... the relocation  
7 of entire communities is also being evaluated. There are,  
8 at least two communities that we have information on that  
9 may qualify entirely for, for relocation.

10 This option exists.

11 So, So, there are several options, but it is a case-by-case  
12 basis and if you want to get into that... talk about that  
13 little detail, allow me to finish the... the part of the  
14 presentation and we'll soon go into the details of, of each  
15 case. I can explain a little bit more about how, how it  
16 would work on a case-by-case basis. But remember that  
17 each of your cases is different. Yes, sorry.

18 MR. BIENVENIDO RAMOS:

19 While repairing the...

20 MRS. MODERATOR:

21 For record keeping purposes...

22 MR. BIENVENIDO RAMOS:

23 the house.

24 PLANNER CARLOS OLMEDO:

25 But... let me, let me finish these two slides that

1 are left and then I'll respond to all the comments at once.

2 All right?

3 MR. BIENVENIDO RAMOS:

4 All right. Okay.

5 PLANNER CARLOS OLMEDO:

6 Or... Well, well talk to me. Then tell me.

7 MRS. MODERATOR:

8 For record keeping purposes, please enter your name.

9 MR. BIENVENIDO RAMOS:

10 While the house in question is being repaired...

11 MRS. MODERATOR:

12 Your name, your name.

13 MR. BIENVENIDO RAMOS:

14 Bienvenido Ramos. While the house is being repaired,  
15 will the people have to stay there or are they going to be  
16 given a place for them to stay for the during the repair or are  
17 you going to keep those people there while the house is getting  
18 repaired?

19 PLANNER CARLOS OLMEDO:

20 This depends on the type of work in the house. In...

21 We have... With... within the programs where we are already  
22 doing work in houses, there are... Depen... If

23 the house is being reconstructed, the person is relocated, the  
24 rent is paid somewhere else for the period of time that  
25 the pro... that the project takes and is then brought over. If  
26 it is a repair that is considered minor and can be done

1 while the person lives in the house, well, no.

2 MR. WELCOME RIVERA:

3 Yes, yes, I understand that.

4 PLANNER CARLOS OLMEDO:

5 But that option exists, yes.

6 MR. WELCOME RIVERA:

7 Well...

8 MRS. MODERATOR:

9 What town, what town are you from? What town  
10 are you from? From here, from Guayanilla.

11 MR. WELCOME RIVERA:

12 From Las Piedras, Guayanilla.

13 MRS. MODERATOR:

14 Perfect. From here, from Guayanilla, for the record.

15 PLANNER CARLOS OLMEDO:

16 As I mentioned earlier, you can only  
17 participate in the housing program. No, no, it does not allow  
18 commercial areas. This is our website. When  
19 you go to the PRDOH page, look for a tab at the  
20 upper, on the upper right-hand side, that says "CDBG 2017" and  
21 the whole page of what the recovery and mitigation funds  
22 are for is there. You are going to see this. It will  
23 show up like this, a, a, a little logo that says "Housing  
24 Seismic Rehabilitation and Reconstruction Action Plan."  
25 Press there and you will reach this area.

1 Here you will be able to download the action plan if you want  
2 to read it, read all the details of the program, and if you  
3 want to submit comments in writing, you can do so, by pressing  
4 this button. We will be receiving comments until  
5 December 31st of this year. Okay? So, before  
6 you go party at the end of the year, submit the  
7 comments to us, hit send and then you can go and  
8 party.

9 We originally had two public hearings  
10 which were held on November 28 and  
11 29 in the municipalities of Ponce and Yauco, but the mayors  
12 asked us for more public hearings. Among those, this hearing.  
13 So, we're here today and we're going to be here on the 14th of  
14 December, at 10:00 in the morning, at the Club  
15 Puertorriqueño de Ensenada, in Guánica, and at 4:00 in the  
16 afternoon, at the Centro Cultural Anastasio Ruiz Irizarry, in  
17 Lajas. You can participate in these as well.

18 Okay?

19 If during the week you want to read the document and  
20 make a presentation and you don't want to send it via email and  
21 you want to present it and stand here and talk, you can do it  
22 during these two hearings. You can tell your neighbors  
23 or people you know who are affected as well that  
24 would like to participate. They have these two opportunities.  
25 All right? Because this one's already done, it's already gone.

1 MRS. MODERATOR:

2 It is also important, Carlos, that they have the availability  
3 to make their comments. Whoever does not have, right, 'online',  
4 the ease of doing it online, they can also  
5 take the form with them, complete it today,  
6 take the form with them, hand it in on the 14th and leave it  
7 in writing, right, their comment on paper, their  
8 suggestion. Okay?

9 PLANNER CARLOS OLMEDO:

10 So, now for the last part, we will now  
11 listen to any comments you may have. We  
12 will... This is the approval process of the action  
13 plan. When it's over, right, until the... you have until  
14 December 31st to submit comments. We  
15 will be there as of that date answering,  
16 presenting all the questions, comments and answering  
17 those that have to be published.  
18 This will be published on our web site and all documentation is  
19 submitted to HUD. At the end of January, February of  
20 next year, we will arrive with the six municipalities,  
21 CONSUR, with, with, with the Consorcio del Sur and there are  
22 going to be activities in each one of the, of the  
23 municipalities, where we will bring more information, specific  
24 information. Your comments are very important. We  
25 have... We run over thirty programs and

1 we have about seven different divisions or eight divisions.  
2 Your comments let us know which ones are  
3 concerns you have and when we visit,  
4 we'll bring representatives from all of them, from all these  
5 divisions, right. So, that's why it's important... What  
6 we can't answer here because the staff isn't  
7 here, we are going to answer. We are going to write it down  
8 and give the answer in writing on our website and we will  
9 come to you. We are coordinating meetings with... through  
10 CONSUR, what dates we will be visiting. This is what is  
11 going to be promoted. The mayors are going to going to promote  
12 it. We are going to prepare the documentation and all that. We  
13 will visit... Sorry. I'm going too fast. At the end of  
14 January or February. I don't want to give you specific dates,  
15 because I am not authorized. Not yet, it has not been  
16 coordinated well. To each of the municipalities to do... to  
17 give, to explain more about the program, to talk about what is  
18 going to be the process of... how the application process will  
19 be, the documentation they need to apply and all that.  
20 Okay? Why don't we do that during these last few weeks?  
21 Because everything is slower during Christmas and all that and  
22 we want to arrive with the full team and everything. So, now  
23 we can address any comments you may have.  
24 MRS. MODERATOR:  
25 Yes, the representative has a comment...

1 PLANNER CARLOS OLMEDO:

2 Sure.

3 MRS. MODERATOR:

4 ...one question.

5 REPRESENTATIVE JOSÉ RIVERA:

6 For information, right, for the people who are  
7 here, they can't apply for anything until February, until  
8 CONSUR comes and does... The date you were  
9 mentioning these days. Which is for... Yes, I'll, I'll  
10 tell you, because after today, well I'm sure more people will  
11 go to city hall to ask questions and to my office  
12 as well, the district office, and we would like to have all the  
13 information.

14 PLANNER CARLOS OLMEDO:

15 We have, we have some information  
16 that the municipalities have already provided to us, right. The  
17 municipalities have the list of people who were  
18 affected and other things. However, there is a specific process  
19 and we have to exchange, don't we, one  
20 documentation and information with each of the, each of  
21 those affected. How the process will work,  
22 first there is the stage or the, or the... the meetings, which  
23 we call them 'outreach,' which is to visit each  
24 community, provide them with the information on what  
25 documents they need, what are the requirements, all that,



1 of all personnel, including the various parties.  
2 We have the property titles program. We have several  
3 other programs and there and in the upcoming events,  
4 where the intake program begins, the intake  
5 part, which is the... the, the application part. The  
6 application processes are very specific. They will be  
7 open for quite a prolonged period of time,  
8 but they will include not only us coming here and  
9 re... and receiving your information, but also  
10 an Internet platform where you will be able to  
11 apply, the person who wishes to apply in this way and  
12 phone numbers which you will be able to call and to help  
13 you with the application process.

14 In that, in that part CONSUR will be heavily  
15 involved, where they will already have offices in the  
16 region and you are going to... you are going to be able to  
17 visit these offices and submit documentation and receive more  
18 information in that... of that, of that issue.

19 Question? Sure. Go ahead.

20 MRS. MODERATOR:

21 Question.

22 MR. CARLOS SANJURJO:

23 Good day. For record keeping purposes, my name is  
24 Carlos Sanjurjo. I live in Guayanilla. My home was  
25 affected by the tremors. Then, FEMA gave me some

1 money. I repaired it, but the money FEMA gave me was  
2 not... You know? I came up short, basically. What can I  
3 do now to apply for that aid to finish  
4 what... what I'm missing?

5 PLANNER CARLOS OLMEDO:

6 When... Apply, because the... ones on our behalf,  
7 are going to inspect your home. They will see what were  
8 the damages that were... that, that were reported to FEMA, what  
9 you have done and what remains to be done...

10 MR. CARLOS SANJURJO:

11 Okay.

12 PLANNER CARLOS OLMEDO:

13 ... and from that they'll to tell you.

14 MR. CARLOS SANJURJO:

15 Thank you very much.

16 PLANNER CARLOS OLMEDO:

17 Since it's engineers and architects who are going to  
18 visit. All, all of our programs are done with  
19 licensed engineers and architects. There's not... and all  
20 the repairs will be made to code. This, this case  
21 can... really, this can be done, if they consider  
22 that the repair... that the house is not safe, even when it's  
23 a minor repair, because they are going to, to, to try to make  
24 a major repair to ensure that the house will withstand  
25 another event, whether it be a flood or

1 winds or an earthquake. So, you will see, that it  
2 has, it's happened to us already at, at the properties that  
3 we're repairing from, from María, that a major repair is made  
4 than what was originally intended to be done and  
5 it's for those, those mitigation processes, right,  
6 that we make sure the house will withstand other, other  
7 events.

8 MR. CARLOS SANJURJO:

9 Thank you very much.

10 MRS. MODERATOR:

11 Very good question. Here is another question from the  
12 gentleman.

13 MR. BIENVENIDO RAMOS:

14 Then the repairs will start after  
15 February?

16 MRS. MODERATOR:

17 No.

18 PLANNER CARLOS OLMEDO:

19 No, no, no. You apply in February and then your  
20 case is evaluated, engineers and architects are sent to  
21 inspect, a floorplan of the house is drawn up, the permit  
22 is submitted and the construction process  
23 begins. This, this is a formal construction.

24 MR. BIENVENIDO RAMOS:

25 When I was born, there were no telephones. These

1 cell phones, that's one thing I don't understand.  
2 Communicating with... through the Internet, that's like you  
3 telling me to go be an airplane pilot. I don't understand the  
4 dang cell phones So, now you need to process an  
5 application online. Really, can't they come to  
6 the houses and take the time to fill out the paperwork?  
7 PLANNER CARLOS OLMEDO:  
8 Okay.  
9 MR. BIENVENIDO RAMOS:  
10 I would offer him a cup of coffee So, that he'll be  
11 content..  
12 PLANNER CARLOS OLMEDO:  
13 No, no. The Internet is always an option, the  
14 Internet is always an option. We will be visiting  
15 each one of the municipalities, right. This is being  
16 coordinating with CONSUR, the ma... and the mayors. We  
17 will be visiting at various different stages of the process.  
18 The first is to give the program more promotion and to  
19 explain to you which are the documents that will be... are  
20 going to be asked... what are the requirements, the  
21 documents that you're going to be needing and So, on, and we're  
22 also going to come work on the application. CONSUR will  
23 be... will have a physical office here, in the region, and will  
24 have representatives in the different municipalities, at the  
25 city halls.

1 How will CONSUR operate? I don't want to get into that  
2 detail, because it is the mayors' decision, but the mayor  
3 is already spreading the word that they are going to visit the  
4 houses.

5 MAYOR RAÚL RIVERA:

6 I can answer that question for him. Just as you  
7 mentioned, this is our daily bread and I include myself.  
8 I live in the upper area of Guayanilla and there, well the,  
9 the... the Internet system... The only thing I have is  
10 a, a little plate that points over there, to, to Peñuelas  
11 and when Peñuelas goes dark up there, I'm left  
12 without Internet. That's one thing. When we were doing  
13 virtual, doing virtual classes, well my children  
14 had to move to other locations and we had to look for  
15 other alternatives and those tools.  
16 We are aware of all of this, that is what we are  
17 conscious of, but there, on a little chart that he mentioned  
18 there, on one of the small charts there are 9 million dollars  
19 out of those 221 to hire staff and that staff that is going  
20 to be hired, there will be staff at the municipality, at the  
21 municipality, not in Ponce, not where CONSUR is located, not in  
22 San Juan, where you pick up the phone or do any  
23 errand and we will go to your home and even if you do not call,  
24 even if you don't call, we will go... that person has to  
25 periodically make reports and carry out investigations

1 from where your case is being held, how your case is being  
2 held.

3 Why? Because I understand that the... that I have  
4 people here who lost everything. Much less can they  
5 pay for Internet, they don't have Internet. Sometimes, they  
6 don't have a cell phone. We are aware of all of this. That is  
7 why we have been going from house to house taking notes. And  
8 also, when the tremors hit, you were visited and...

9 I understand, right, that you were visited at a one point and  
10 data was, was taken. All of that data is there, all the  
11 data and if it's not there, February, which is right there, is  
12 there already, February is already there, So, we are going to  
13 be updating any kind of, of... right, agreement that  
14 we have.

15 To give you an example, there were people whose house  
16 was demolished and those people have already built their house,  
17 well, I believe that no longer makes them eligible for the  
18 program, because they have already built their house. There are  
19 people, that out of necessity, could not wait for these funds.  
20 Well, they took out a loan or whatever it was, their savings  
21 and fixed up the house. Then these people, perhaps, aren't  
22 eligible, but, as he mentions, perhaps, the  
23 repairs that were made for that house, were not  
24 enough. However, you may be eligible  
25 to reinforce it, make a foundation slab, to put something on

1 the, on the columns, whatever it is.  
2 But the important thing here is that this, this thing of, of,  
3 of disclosing millions, to be talking about a lot of money,  
4 I think that's over now. I believe it is time  
5 for action. It's time for us to roll up our  
6 sleeves and, and be able to work already. There are people here  
7 that visit me all the time and I'm going to talk to them with  
8 complete honesty, I'm sometimes embarrassed to listen to them,  
9 because I know what their needs are. I know what  
10 they need, but, sometimes, it is difficult for me, because I  
11 don't... I don't have the resources, right, and maybe I can give  
12 them aid that I will then limit another aid for them that  
13 is going to be a little bit better.  
14 What I want is for your little house, if you need to  
15 to reinforce it, to have it reinforced, if it has, right, an  
16 architectural barrier, to have it fixed. If it is necessary to  
17 reinforce an... open a wider door, whatever it is,  
18 have it worked on So, you can have a better quality of life.  
19 That is what I aspire to and what all of us that are here  
20 aspire to, to, to be happy and should,  
21 right, another tremor of that magnitude visit us, well then,  
22 let it hit us, give us a chance to run away, because  
23 that doesn't guarantee that it won't fall down, right, but  
24 that, at least, it gives us a chance to run out and save the  
25 most beautiful thing that we have, which is our life.

1 I, like you, get frustrated, at times, over  
2 many things, right, that, that are there, that are there  
3 and, and, and, sometimes, we can't have them. To give you an  
4 example, yesterday I was participating in a radio program,  
5 and I was asked about the demolitions, how long it takes to  
6 demolish a house and I easily told him, "Two days, three  
7 days, but the paperwork, two years, one year. Three days, I  
8 break your house, I smash it to pieces, I leave it as if  
9 nothing had ever appeared, because the machinery works  
10 magic, but the, the paperwork, So, that we can disburse the  
11 funds and we can..."

12 Because we break things up like crazy and then, "Oh, you did  
13 this step wrong, that step wrong, that step wrong," and when  
14 you come and knock on my door and say, "Look, you demolished my  
15 house and this, what are we going to do about this now?" and I  
16 go, "Oh, it's because I did this wrong, and I can't help you  
17 now." These are the things that, that, sometimes, well I  
18 justify, to say, the, the bureaucracy, So, that everything  
19 remains as it should. It's unfortunate, right, but that's what  
20 we were meant to live through. But I make a commitment to you,  
21 truly, looking at you in the eyes, that we are not going to  
22 leave you alone in this process, because we are learning.

23 All of us who are here, are learning from  
24 something different, something that no one else has dared to  
25 do, that five or six municipalities can for... move aside their



1 political differences So, they can work as a team, because  
2 im... imagine that we, as a municipality, would make a  
3 auction for, for those that are going to design. Guánica does  
4 this, Ponce does it, Peñuelas does it, they all do it at the  
5 same time, as there is almost no one who does this. What  
6 happens? Well, nobody... they're not going there and they're  
7 not coming here nor are they go... and then, we get stuck.  
8 If we just make an auction for that purpose, then we will  
9 already have the contractors who are going to do the designs.  
10 When we hold an, an, an, an auction for  
11 construction, which is what you want to see, then  
12 we are going to have only one auction, but the  
13 projects are individualized because the needs that  
14 Ponce has are not the same as mine. The needs we have  
15 are not the same as the ones, as the ones they have over  
16 there and that's why beyond the, the, right... it's  
17 working as a team. Beyond this, it is knowing how to move aside  
18 what divides us and work with what unites us,  
19 because that's what I want, for you to be happy.  
20 I've visited everyone over there and I have a friend  
21 here whose name is Melvin, he's over there, that  
22 these past two years have been worse than when the  
23 earthquake hit and his little house is exactly as it was as on  
24 the day of the hurricane. We have to demolish it, we have to  
25 work on it and we have been working with the bureaucracy,

1 working with the bureaucracy, working with the bureaucracy,  
2 and finally, thank God, we made it. To make a long story  
3 short, it is not the same to demolish a, a structure that  
4 does not have asbestos and lead. You demolish that one in  
5 half an hour. You take out the permits, which take about two  
6 or three months. But when the, the, the residence has either  
7 asbestos or lead, ah, that's a whole other thing. And to get  
8 the person to remove that, we had to hold four auctions,  
9 because those who came either did not comply or, simply, did  
10 not come to the auction, because there are none in Puerto  
11 Rico. We got them and it's finally the time for action. The  
12 wait, well I think it's already, already over.

13 REPRESENTATIVE JOSÉ RIVERA:

14 Thank you. One question, and it's because I was talking with  
15 the mayor, people who have received money from FEMA or who  
16 have received money from their private insurance, would they  
17 qualify for the program?

18 PLANNER CARLOS OLMEDO:

19 They may qualify. Yes. I am not the person who  
20 has all the requirements for the... for participating,  
21 but they may qualify.

22 MRS. MODERATOR:

23 We thank the mayor, indeed, for the briefing, the  
24 explanation he also gives us and the answers  
25 precisely to, to those previous support questions about

1 FEMA or any other insurance.

2 PLANNER CARLOS OLMEDO:

3 A, a... a comm... a... Something that the mayor  
4 is asking me to explain, there may have been... there may have  
5 been a case of someone whose house, their house was affected by  
6 María and then, also by the earthquakes. Yes, you can par...  
7 you can participate in the program. Okay.

8 MRS. MODERATOR:

9 We have two people... the miss and and then we go with the  
10 lady and... Give her, give her the chance...

11 MRS. AUREA ECHEVARRÍA:

12 Here and there. Yes, we are on our way. Let me go through  
13 here.

14 PLANNER CARLOS OLMEDO:

15 Ah, they got there first. Okay.

16 MRS. MODERATOR:

17 ... for her to go first and then we'll go to you  
18 real quick.

19 MRS. ILKA PABON:

20 Good morning, everyone. God bless you all. I  
21 come from Ponce. I had been in the media, on  
22 Channel 2. My case was very tough. I am a person with  
23 a disability, I have an autistic son. I am... disabled  
24 with morbid obesity. I am very frustrated. I'm very  
25 grateful to the Mayor of Guayanilla, Mr. Raúl,

1 that has always opened doors for me, and I come from Ponce.  
2 I have been denied household materials.  
3 So... My case has to do with the tremors. You can  
4 see very clearly in the video that the tree is falling down on  
5 the house. Rocks inside the house. It has been very tough for  
6 me to travel here, even though I have cancer.  
7 I have many health complications. They don't ensure many  
8 things, right.  
9 I know that everyone has a need just like  
10 me. I want them to value all these people as well that  
11 have this great need, just as I do. I do not  
12 I want them to focus on colors, but on the people, that to  
13 everybody we are family. And I am very grateful for the  
14 mayor of Guayanilla because he has opened the doors for me  
15 all the time, really, and it is for you to see that this  
16 is brotherhood coming from the town of Guayanilla and  
17 I made it this far. I am very grateful to the helpers,  
18 to the team from, from Guayanilla, Eddie Echevarría, you know?  
19 very kind, mayor Raul, and I am outraged because I am being  
20 denied many things in Ponce, I am very frustrated, and I am  
21 being honest about this case.  
22 I want you to... really, if you can help me. Like I  
23 told you, I have an autistic son, morbid obesity,  
24 disability. I do not have a ramp. I have been thrown through the  
25 ringer, to say... I am grateful, I say it again. I am in a

1 public housing complex, the Residencial José Tormos Diego,  
2 and they haven't done anything. I was promised to be put in...  
3 this is just embarrassing is what it is, they haven't even  
4 painted the disabled parking lot. I have been put on a second  
5 floor. I have reasonable accommodation. All the physicians have  
6 written (sic) even the media and they haven't even...  
7 they've disregarded everything. Psychiatrists, psychologists,  
8 internists, orthopedists, and even the doctor told me that if  
9 I remain on the second floor, I'm going to die.

10 MR. JAVIER ECHEVARRÍA:

11 Have you not written to...?

12 MRS. ILKA PABON:

13 No, nothing. I have my four-point cane. This  
14 was years ago, believe it or not, this was prescribed  
15 to me by the mayor of Ponce, Irizarry Pabón, was my  
16 doctor, but, really, I don't have the facilities. They don't  
17 even have the, the relevant assistance I need  
18 at this time. The... OMED had also gone there,  
19 which many know as Emergency Management. Well  
20 as I mentioned to you, they had told me they were going to get  
21 materials, that they were going to take out the tree, that they  
22 were going to take out the rocks; negative, at no time, up to  
23 the present day. We are talking from the time of the  
24 earthquakes and look at everything that has happened up to  
25 today. That will go... That... I have the photos that show how

1 the house has deteriorated. I always let them know, if I had  
2 been placed... I am being... I am grateful, I say it  
3 again, in the housing complex. I do not discriminate, because  
4 there are many good people there. There is everything in this  
5 life, everywhere. As they say around here, in the town, "Beans  
6 are harvested," but knowing the condition that I am... that I'm  
7 in, in which I am incapacitated, second floor, without  
8 accommodations, not even on the toilet at the house. They don't  
9 even say, "We're going to help you, Ilka, to give you the  
10 accommodations, even if it's just to paint a short sidewalk."  
11 Look, go to the house in Sabaneta, Parcelas  
12 Sabaneta, Loma Bonita, Number 36, you will cry,  
13 how the rocks have fallen, how they fell. My daughter's room,  
14 who's in college, who works so hard, who does not rest,  
15 who is at the Pontifical Catholic University, who studied, as  
16 in, she's a good daughter, to see her hustle and those stones  
17 fell from the room, that there is a video, and she lost her  
18 college books. It is outrageous. It is very rough. A girl who is  
19 a fighter, a hustler, studious, that it, it hurts  
20 her to look at me and every time I come here, to the  
21 Guayanilla City Hall, where I'm already known. I am more than  
22 grateful, I really am.  
23 But do you know why? Because this town of  
24 Guayanilla is humble, it's humble, I... it really  
25 is. I am very grateful to them, and they have been the only

1 ones who have welcomed me with open arms. I am outraged and  
2 I have to say it and I have to get it off my chest. The only  
3 thing that I say, if there is assistance for residents in  
4 the Ponce area, to please be polite and not treat people as  
5 a piece of garbage. Treat the public with respect. No matter  
6 where you come from and... remember where God has pulled  
7 you out of. We all have rights. This is not a color thing,  
8 because Mrs. Dinorah, from Ayuda al Ciudadano  
9 disrespected me, whether you are disabled or not disabled,  
10 we are all supposed to be treated with politeness,  
11 with values, with respect.

12 If you do not know how to work at a job, then don't work  
13 and retire. This is not the place. That's why it's called Ayuda  
14 al Ciudadano. It is to help your neighbors who have  
15 needs. No matter the color, this is family.

16 As the Bible says, "We are brethren among the people of  
17 God." We have to help each other as a team, and I have  
18 hope and I hope that you will help  
19 me. Thank you all. Good day and God bless all  
20 of you. Ilka Pabón Santiago.

21 MRS. MODERATOR:

22 Pabón Santiago. Thank you.

23 MRS. ILKA PABON:

24 To you.

25

1 MRS. MODERATOR:

2 Your name and where you are from, first.

3 MRS. ÁUREA ECHEVARRÍA:

4 Good, good morning. Good morning. My name is

5 Áurea Echevarría. I am a community leader in Barrio Jagua

6 Tuna and a community social worker. I have heard today

7 (sic) your presentation, from the Department of

8 Housing, but I have to tell you.... First, I made some

9 observations. Guayanilla is an aging town. As you

10 see here, most of our people exceed the ages

11 of 55 or 60 years. As our mayor said, more than 4 thousand

12 people have left our town, and we can imagine

13 why. I went to your website and the first thing I found is

14 is that you have to take a course on something to qualify and

15 after, the evaluations.

16 The requirements... Our town, in addition to

17 aging, is poor. We have a per ca... per

18 capita under poverty. Most of our inhabitants,

19 are not only elderly, they are people who live off their

20 retirement or social security. Am I wrong? No, right? Then,

21 how will this aid reach these people who do not

22 qualify? Many do not have the technological awareness.

23 I have been a community leader for 40 years and I have

24 seen how people need help to even get a form out for

25 anything from the police. Sometimes, they don't even know



1 where to get a vaccine and we have to help them.  
2 Now, I ask you, have you reached  
3 that point of observation in knowing that there isn't...there  
4 are people who cannot access these services because, perhaps,  
5 they do not have the support, knowledge, capacity, or they're  
6 sick? What are we going to do with these people? How are we  
7 going to give them the services they deserve? I have also seen  
8 200 million do... 200 million dollars since 2019.  
9 As I told you just now, the people of Puerto Rico live  
10 in poverty and that is why we receive So, many millions.  
11 We cannot equal ourselves to any state in the  
12 United States. Here you don't pay 20.00 dollars or 25.00  
13 dollars an hour to anyone working in a factory if you do not  
14 have an education. Another thing, I've seen in my neighborhood  
15 and I'll talk about myself, poor people. There's Mudito's  
16 example. We call him Mudito. Mudito got to work at the Caribe  
17 Hilton, in San Juan, as a chef for many years. The  
18 pride of our neighborhood. Today, he still has a blue  
19 awning. Do you know why? Those who know the history of  
20 this town, we know that this was a sugar cane town.  
21 Many of our ancestors lived on land that didn't even  
22 have a property title. Their parents and children grew up  
23 there, their grandparents and their grandchildren will be left  
24 there. How are we going to ask for a property title from a  
25 person who has a... who has lived for eight generations

1 there and do not know? This should also be taken into  
2 consideration. That is the case with Mudito. No one gave  
3 him help, because in addition to being mute, he is a person  
4 that lives in his parents' house, which was given to them by  
5 their parents and the parents of their parents. And when FEMA  
6 comes, "Give me the papers," without an interpreter. But what  
7 paper is he going to give you if he depends on his neighbors to  
8 do his groceries and take him to the hospital? And this  
9 situation is not Mudito's alone.

10 Our neighborhood has this kind of people. I'm  
11 concerned that these initiatives may not reach the people  
12 who truly need it, because I can  
13 talk, many people of us can talk and discuss  
14 and ask, but, really, there are people here who do not know how  
15 to ask and don't know where to truly go to where they can get  
16 help because they have the lack of knowledge. It makes me glad  
17 to hear the mayor when he says that he is going to have a group  
18 of people who will go to the houses. That is satisfactory, but  
19 we also know that these agencies because we see it in  
20 FEMA, it's all a bureaucracy and if FEMA gets there first,  
21 PRDOH doesn't give me anything, because FEMA already gave me or  
22 I didn't qualify.

23 But we see the rising costs, which is also another situation  
24 that you have to measure, when a board cost me 2.00  
25 dollars, now it costs me 10.00. So, I'm going to fix

1 a house with 4,000 dollars given to me by FEMA, but now I  
2 need 8,000, because four years ago, it was worth 5 or  
3 3, but now it's worth 10. These things must also be  
4 taken into account. Very good. But another thing, my case,  
5 and I'm going to talk about myself. "Ah, Aurea, what  
6 happened to you? You have insurance, go to the insurance  
7 company," but we know that poor people here cannot afford to  
8 pay a 300.00 dollars a year, a month, insurance for a house  
9 that is worth 60 thousand dollars. So, they don't give me  
10 any help. Then, along comes FEMA, "Since you have  
11 insurance... and Mrs. Aurea was left without fixing her  
12 house, because the insurance company did not pay her either.  
13 When I go to PRDOH, I don't qualify, because I live alone  
14 and they give me a thousand dollars a month in pension. And are  
15 1,000 dollars a month enough to live? I ask the community  
16 leaders that are here, if any. Is a thousand dollars enough to  
17 live on? No, no. So, we have to be empathetic. These  
18 public policies that agencies have, it is necessary to  
19 to make them as easy as possible for the people. Society is  
20 aging. The most needy are the elderly. Old people raising  
21 old people and old people raising grandchildren or old people  
22 raising their children, but nobody helps old people, eh?  
23 And we have families living with families. Where  
24 are these houses that declared public nuisances? I  
25 think in four years, five years it has been more than  
26 enough for this help to reach us and

1 it's always a stumbling block. Many alternatives are created  
2 and I am grateful for these alternatives that you have made  
3 to unite, but I hope they are not just words. Do you know  
4 why? Because there are people in need and just like when  
5 María hit us, other atmospheric systems hit us,  
6 but we were also hit hard by earthquakes. Let's not  
7 wait. I think four years is a long time. See the  
8 state in which this woman is in, unnecessary, because in  
9 addition to being public servants, which I was with much  
10 honor for 30 years in the Department of Education, we need  
11 to have empathy, a lot of empathy for those in need and to  
12 reach out to these people.

13 Be open, with endless support, where we can  
14 offer it to them So, these people understand and So, these  
15 people can act. "Don't you have a degree in  
16 property? Okay. Well, I have an alternative for you."  
17 "Your insurance didn't pay you? Okay. Here I have a  
18 alternative." "Didn't they give you the money? Well, here I  
19 have an alternative. We will not stand idly by and let  
20 the funds be returned or as is often done and you  
21 will excuse me, more than half of it is used for salaries, in  
22 research and observations and nothing is done.

23 The people do not need researches or observations. The  
24 people need action and it is now, because we are tired.  
25 We live in fear that... I will tell you one thing,

1     there are quakes here every... every day, 10 and 20 times.  
2     That we don't feel it is one thing, but yes, it's still quaking  
3     and it is in the south and we have seen it in Cidra and it is  
4     the same in Hatillo and we've seen it in San Juan, but it's not  
5     easy to live in a land where it quakes every day. The fear  
6     is latent and if 4 thousand have already left, I do not want to  
7     think that 4,000 more are leaving.  
8     You know what? My family and my children are all over there  
9     and like me, there are many, living alone, because our  
10    families have had to emigrate. There is nothing here, no  
11    work and that is the saddest thing. So, we have to  
12    act with initiatives that favor the people  
13    and the communities that are poor and leave behind all this  
14    bureaucracy. If the help is there, let's give it to the people.  
15    If public policies have to be changed, let's  
16    change them, but people are still in need, people  
17    are still fearful.  
18    I urge you that just as the people united from  
19    Guayanilla, Yauco, Ponce, Peñuelas, I don't know, just like the  
20    community leaders, we have to unite, because I alone  
21    fighting for my neighborhood with what I have, Harold alone  
22    fighting for his neighborhood with what he has, if Harold's  
23    problems are the same ones I have, the same ones  
24    you have in your community, the same ones we all have.  
25    How can we be a force to be heard?

1     Joining together. Just as the people came together to be able  
2     to do more, well we, the community leaders, have  
3     to unite to be able to do more for our  
4     communities and prevent them from getting to five, six and  
5     seven years and still nothing has been done with all the things  
6     that have happened to us in our society. So, I leave you with  
7     that thought.

8     Thank you very much for the alternatives and let's hope that  
9     this is not just words or a meeting. Let's hope  
10    that this reaches the communities and that the people feel  
11    pleased that for the first time we are being heard and acted  
12    upon, not just words, but it's being taken to action.

13    Good morning. Thank you.

14    MR. HAROLD MARTINEZ:

15    Good morning, good morning to all. Harold Martinez,  
16    for the record. Harold Martínez, from, from  
17    Guayanilla, from here, from Playa Guayanilla, community  
18    leader. Right, I'm picking up from our colleague.

19    I'm going to be very brief on this, right, but... And, and I  
20    don't want to lay blame. We don't want to blame, right,  
21    but do you know where I heard about this meeting? In  
22    PRDOH, in San Juan. I, I, I have...

23    MR. BIENVENIDO RAMOS:

24    A community leader from the beach because I don't know  
25    you.

1 MR. HAROLD MARTINEZ:

2 That is correct.

3 MR. BIENVENIDO RAMOS:

4 I don't know you and you've never been around my house.

5 MR. HAROLD MARTINEZ:

6 I'll talk with you later. In addition to this, ri... ri...

7 right, what, what, what I want to, to bring up is

8 that, that comm... community leadership be a part

9 of all these processes, because I am certain that it is a

10 tool that is going to be very effective, because who... who

11 more than the community leader knows where the need is?

12 What... what's the, right, what's the point of all this? I am

13 in several organizations and that is precisely what it is for,

14 to prote... to be able to try... Right?

15 MR. BIENVENIDO RAMOS:

16 I can't leave the house. You're wronger than

17 nothing, because you have to do... knock the door at home

18 and I answer, I'm not going to leave the door open because

19 there are charlatans out there.

20 MR. HAROLD MARTINEZ:

21 To be able to reach, right, and I... right, and I'm in

22 several co... several, several organizations, precisely,

23 in order to reach those in need, to, well to

24 aid that need, sometimes, that not even po... the, the

25 politicians, that, at times, they cannot aid it, try to

1 bring a relief, right, and I am in several  
2 organizations. I'm even in PRODEC, which has 130  
3 leaders and, and we help each other, because we know the  
4 need that the, the, the towns of Puerto Rico  
5 have, not only in Guayanilla, not only at the Playa,  
6 because I've worked, right, I've gone to bring and handle  
7 the needs in Peñuelas, Adjuntas, Yauco, Guánica and it's during  
8 my free time, because for... I don't get paid for that.  
9 And for me, the be... best satisfaction, you know what it  
10 is? Me being able to help, me being able to help and to know  
11 that I br... I brought, indeed, relief to people in need. I  
12 would like, right, that in the process you include the...  
13 community leadership, and I am sure that they will facilitate  
14 the work that will be carried out and without a doubt  
15 and one, one, one of the, of the recommendations,  
16 right, is to... is to take this message with you when  
17 there are meetings and So, on, right, and they do it for...  
18 have a truck come, right, those sound trucks and, and carry  
19 that message, because everyone doesn't have access to social  
20 media and here, at, at the Playa, specifically, about  
21 70-odd percent are older adults.  
22 I even brought the message to one person, and they told  
23 me... What did they tell me? "No, because I don't have... I  
24 don't have a property title, they are not going to give me  
25 anything." There's a lot of misinformation and we need to,



1 right, inform those people and educate them, right, So, that  
2 they can receive what they deserve. Thank you.

3 MRS. MODERATOR:

4 Thank you, Harold. We remind you that you can submit  
5 your comments in writing. We have the forms here,  
6 on the table. Katherine is helping me So, that you're not  
7 left without the opportunity to submit your, your writings.  
8 You can deliver them here if you have them ready. You can  
9 give them in on the 14th, while we're in Guánica and Lajas,  
10 but, right, we... we urge you to turn them in  
11 here today So, that you can make your comments in  
12 writing. Do we have time for, for another  
13 comment? Yes, yes, yes. We have the, the man over there.  
14 Ah, you have one waiting over there.

15 MR. RAFAEL TORRES:

16 Good morning. Rafael Torres, from the Indios right here,  
17 from Guayanilla. Sim... simply, to ask, ok,  
18 two little things to the people who are in charge of this. As  
19 is, it was discussed a little while ago over there and the  
20 gentleman presented a board that had a tons of millions of  
21 dollars on it there, okay? That there is a consortium of six  
22 municipalities. Simply put, I... what I want is for that money  
23 to arrive as soon as possible, okay?  
24 In other words, they should not say that there are 500 million  
25 dollars today and we have to wait five more years for the

1 500 million dollars to reach the people, okay? When  
2 the mayor presented his first... welcome, he spoke  
3 about the case of a person who was paying rent,  
4 that they were paying for a house, that they were paying for  
5 water and electricity in two houses, telephone. That case is  
6 mine, okay? I'm still paying for my house, 600.00, 400.00  
7 for the rented... house, water and electricity for both  
8 houses, telephone, Internet, mandatory in my house, because  
9 I work for the Department of Education as a teacher. In  
10 other words, my house needs to have Internet, ok? And  
11 to me it comes out to almost 1,700.00 dollars a month since  
12 December 2019 and I haven't failed, okay, because I'm  
13 still waiting for someone to say, "I'm going to help you  
14 with your house."  
15 The insurance gave me 7 thousand dollars, okay? It does not...  
16 No, FEMA didn't help me. When I spoke to a person  
17 to help me, they said, "7 thousand dollars. Of the eight  
18 walls you have cracked, I can fix one for you." They  
19 said, "With those 7 thousand dollars, I can fix one for you."  
20 But then, what do I do with the other seven? Well, I had to  
21 leave my house as it is, because I'm not going to fix one, one  
22 wall and I'm still going to be out of my house anyway, you know  
23 what I mean? What I want is that this money, if it is going to  
24 arrive, to arrive as soon as possible. In other words, if you  
25 can do the, the arrangement that instead of waiting until

1 February to fill out the application, we can fill it out  
2 tomorrow, we fill it out tomorrow, So, then it starts processing  
3 in January, because if I finish the application in  
4 February, December of next year could pass by, and I  
5 am sure of that, that by December the money will not have  
6 arrived and I pay another year of the \$1,700.00 that I pay  
7 monthly, because the PRDOH process of giving out money  
8 to the, to the municipalities...  
9 Everybody said so, the mayor said so, the  
10 representative, you said it yourself, "The bureaucratic  
11 process, the money is always late." In other words, I ask  
12 you to then make the arrangements So, that the money  
13 can arrive earlier and the application can be made  
14 earlier and that by the middle of next year we will, at least,  
15 already have an answer that we will get the help,  
16 because, in my case, it's already running out, it's already  
17 running out for me the, the, the, the desire to continue, to  
18 keep hoping someone can help me. I mean, three years. There are  
19 people here who have been in the same situation for three years  
20 too, but they have not had to go through what I went through,  
21 of taking out \$1,700.00 a month to pay for all the things you  
22 pay for, okay? For what I'm paying.  
23 So, that's all I'm going to ask of you. In other words, that  
24 the process picks up or hurries up, not have them show up to  
25 say, "Okay. We have this here." No, we have Guayanilla,

1 we have Yauco, we have Peñuelas, we have the, the towns  
2 that make up the consortium and priority must be given  
3 to these towns, because here we always talk about  
4 priorities. "No, the priority," is heard, but the  
5 priority is not there. Priority is simply a  
6 word, a word, that everybody uses to  
7 say, "I'm going to get this out of the way. You are the  
8 priority."

9 We have not been a priority since 2019. Since  
10 2017, Guayanilla has not been a priority, because nothing has  
11 happened here. In other words, no help has arrived. FEMA,  
12 well, because FEMA comes in and gives people a handout, but  
13 what about the, the other people who didn't qualify, who  
14 didn't qualify like me? We are still waiting, okay?  
15 That's important, young man, okay? To speed up this  
16 process, that if the mayor has to go and fight, the  
17 representative has to go and fight, well, look, that's your  
18 job, fighting. Let them go and fight with whoever,  
19 with PRDOH or anybody, So, that this money can be  
20 allocated as soon as possible, okay?

21 Because, as I told you just now, the process is... the  
22 problem is that they say "We have one billion dollars." There  
23 are... billions of dollars here. Where are they? Nothing  
24 has arrived. In other words, we fill our... we fill people's  
25 ears by telling them "The federal government allocated 7

1 billion dollars for housing," but when you  
2 ask, "Where are they?" No one knows where the  
3 money is, nobody knows, okay?

4 MRS. MODERATOR:

5 Thank you, thank you, Mr. Rafael.

6 MR. RAFAEL TORRES:

7 Thank you for listening to me.

8 MRS. MODERATOR:

9 Thank you. I have the lady here. Your name and, and  
10 where you're visiting us from.

11 MRS. CARMEN ROMÁN:

12 My name is Carmen Román Soto. I am a resident of  
13 Barrio Guayanilla. From Barrio Verdún, sorry, from Barrio  
14 Verdún, from Guayanilla. My question is, my house was already  
15 demolished. I am living at a relative's house.

16 When, for when? Because I need my house now.

17 I need to live in my house now, because I am paying  
18 water, see? And I need, I need to live in my house already,  
19 see? The... Do I have to fill out any other applications? What  
20 do I have to do?

21 MRS. MODERATOR:

22 Exactly. Carlos will answer you now. Thank you  
23 very much, Carmen, for your question. Yes.

24 PLANNER CARLOS OLMEDO:

25 Hello. In... Right now, we are in the midst of

1 approval for the action plan. This is why we had  
2 mentioned that, that we were coming... that the plan is to  
3 visit by February and start the outreach process,  
4 which is the process of communicating all requirements,  
5 talking to people, explaining things to them, listening to  
6 everything... answer, answer all those specific questions that  
7 you have, because the, the group that we have here is  
8 reduced and there are going to be people who can...  
9 We have a property title program. So, the  
10 people who do not have property titles can, can participate  
11 under that program for, for obtaining property titles and  
12 participate for other funding. There are... The requirements  
13 that we have is not because we want to. It is because the,  
14 the federal funds come with certain requirements  
15 and those requirements must be met, or else the money  
16 will not be granted and if we grant it, they take it away from  
17 us later. So, we have to comply with those steps.  
18 As much as we may want to tell them, "Yes, give me the  
19 information today," I could take it with me today and I can't  
20 get it processed until the time comes, but keep an eye on it,  
21 because, through the municipalities, and the mayor has already  
22 been clear on this, we will be visiting all six municipalities  
23 and the municipalities are going to have representatives here  
24 who are going to to help you fill out, fill out the  
25 applications, okay?

1 This process is not going to be the same process  
2 as with other cases that... that were handled by PRDOH.  
3 This is a process that will be managed locally by CONSUR and  
4 the municipalities, OK?

5 MRS. MODERATOR:

6 Thank you, Carlos.

7 MR. JOSÉ ZAYAS:

8 Yes, good morning. My name is José Zayas and I am  
9 a resident of Guayanilla. First, I would like to highlight  
10 that the mayor's initiative to establish such an  
11 office in Guayanilla is a, a, a breakthrough activity  
12 that I know is going to help a lot of people and I'm sure that  
13 representative Rivera Madera was... both he and the  
14 mayor, they take some very important data from here and  
15 to recognize the, the, the efforts that they are doing on that  
16 respect.

17 After listening to the people here, I  
18 ask myself how much do these people who have spoken here  
19 truly represent the hundreds or thousands of families in Puerto  
20 Rico who are going through an extremely difficult  
21 situation, which has not only caused emigration to  
22 the United States, but it has unfortunately caused people  
23 to have made drastic decisions with their lives,  
24 because they can't stand the situation we are  
25 living in.

1 I believe that when you are going to solve the problems of  
2 a commu... a community's problems, you have to go to the  
3 community. You have to be interactive with the members of  
4 the community. Let people come to the communities and,  
5 and be bitten by the mosquitoes that bite the community,  
6 have their cars get stuck in the potholes, right, on the  
7 roads So, that, So, that they can directly feel what  
8 these people feel, who don't have a voice or don't  
9 have the initiative, because, truly, they don't  
10 understand what's going on, because as we have discussed  
11 here and as some people have said or as the lady here, from  
12 Ponce and the colleague, look, no, no...  
13 Well, my mom, may she rest in peace, said that she  
14 didn't even know how to hit the cell phone button and yes she  
15 lived alone, she was going to have a terrible time. So, I  
16 believe that direct interaction with the community, visiting  
17 those that are in this situation is the most positive  
18 activity that can be had. We cannot rely on having  
19 our problem solved for us by a bureaucracy that could  
20 be happening in that respect. I remember before, when  
21 you'd have... I'm not from the Playa, but I've been in touch  
22 with a lot of people from the Playa, but, recen... re...  
23 re... I remember when they'd go solve problems for the  
24 people from the Playa, where everything was in the cultural  
25 center. A group of people in suits came down from San Juan,



1 with air conditioning to discuss the problem of a, a  
2 community that was full of mud or because of the flooding  
3 situation, because of the mosquitoes, potholes on the  
4 road and from there they'd go to San Juan and the problem  
5 wouldn't get solved, because there was no interaction with  
6 the community. So, I believe that, that the mayor's  
7 offices and, and the initiative that the representative may,  
8 indeed, instigate or is instigating should lead  
9 to that, in going directly to the person  
10 affected, to where the affected families are. So, I, I  
11 congratulate everyone who has spoken here, because they have  
12 said, right, what, what they feel. But also  
13 I would like to ask two questions, because I have a family  
14 member whose house is full of cracks. Well, there's cracks  
15 everywhere, the floor, in everything. He doesn't qualify,  
16 because the house is in his mother's name. In other words,  
17 no, he doesn't have a property title. This person, well,  
18 he's, he's remained like that, he's living in the house like  
19 that. What could... what could he be doing, what could he  
20 do, if there is any other alternative when not having a  
21 property title in his name, but in his mother's name?

22 MRS. MODERATOR:

23 And the second question?

24 MR. JOSÉ ZAYAS:

25 The second question is, it's a little bit... a little bit

1 fu... funny, because in my house, I live in Santa  
2 María, when the engineer came over, he was an American, and  
3 I said, "Well, look, nothing happened here," but he looked  
4 around the house and found some cracks in the columns.  
5 I had not seen them and, and he painted the house with a  
6 yellow line. I received a letter after he went to see the  
7 house, but I applied and I had no, no, no choice. Also,  
8 I have a neighbor who came from the United States who took a  
9 picture of himself beside the yellow line to take a picture  
10 of himself, So, he could take a, a, a... a souvenir from the  
11 earthquake. But that yellow line, what does it represent and  
12 what is the... what can the person do? To, at least,  
13 be explained exactly what happened there.

14 PLANNER CARLOS OLMEDO:

15 OK. There are three little things, I'll break them down. First,  
16 the mosquitoes bite us. I am, I'm from Carolina,  
17 Isabela, Corozal, Ponce. As in, we get bitten by the same  
18 mosquitoes.

19 MRS. MODERATOR:

20 Yes, but, but, but going back a little bit, right, to  
21 the... the, the... the colleague's observation, on November  
22 29, we got up at 6:40 to a 4.2, to a 4.2.  
23 So, going back to your case, it's true. There's nothing like  
24 being here, in the community, and getting up at 6:40 in the  
25 morning to a 4.2.

1 PLANNER CARLOS OLMEDO:

2 We were here, right next door. In the first case, we  
3 have a program and the people who enter it... There are two  
4 sides to the program. I am going to explain it quickly,  
5 because it is not my program. So, I don't like to explain  
6 all the details, but we do have a program that  
7 helps people who do not have a property title to obtain the  
8 property title and we're going to... When we visit, we are  
9 going to come with the right staff. In some... In... There  
10 is a case where, right, people submit the, the information.  
11 There is another where we, automatically, collect the  
12 information through a program such as the R3 one, which is a  
13 program for household reconstruction. So, that person can  
14 participate. In the second case, the one about the, the cracks,  
15 I would tell him to apply, because all applications in all  
16 such cases, the property is ordered to be inspected.  
17 So, it's an engineer, they're not from FEMA, they're one of  
18 us, from here, from Puerto Rico, licensed, engineer  
19 or architect and they will then tell us if the property  
20 is set to be, to be repaired, or if it's all right or  
21 set to be repaired or to be... has to be  
22 rebuilt or otherwise. So, all the houses that were  
23 affected, more, less, no, don't be fooled because, "Ah,  
24 I was only a little bit impacted." No, no, apply, apply. All  
25 right?

1 MRS. MODERATOR:

2 The promotional information that was at the entrance,  
3 on the desk, has information about the property title  
4 program. As in, if you picked up the papers, right,  
5 the promotional material that was here, on the registration  
6 desk, you have it with you, the information for the property  
7 title program.

8 MRS. JOAN:

9 I want to take advantage of the fact that the gentleman  
10 mentioned the yellow stripe line on his house  
11 when they went to, to make an ocular inspection, right,  
12 because it's based on looking and seeing the walls and the  
13 surroundings. When the groups came, the FEMA  
14 technician teams to make these evaluations, the red  
15 marks meant, supposedly, right, I'm saying what  
16 they explained, that the house had very serious  
17 structural damages and that the structure was in  
18 danger, So, the family should not be left  
19 living there, because they were in danger, the structure  
20 was much too affected and any other shake or  
21 event, right, there could be a tragedy.  
22 The yellow ones were the ones that identified that they  
23 did have problems, such as cracks, right, but that it  
24 wasn't dangerous for the family, So, then,  
25 they could stay there till the necessary repairs could be

1 worked on or make a more in-depth study,  
2 right, of, of exactly how serious the damage is, but that  
3 their assessment was that if it's in yellow, it means that the  
4 family could continue to live there and those that had  
5 green or did not have anything, they were fine. Okay?  
6 These were the definitions, as they were explained  
7 at that time, okay?

8 MRS. MODERATOR:

9 Thank you, Joan, for that, for that explanation. We  
10 are going to give our colleague here a turn. It would be the  
11 last turn we are going to give. Remember that you do not leave  
12 without giving your comment, because the comment form is there.  
13 So, fill out the comment form and don't leave without  
14 writing your comment. All right? We give the last  
15 turn to the colleague here.

16 MRS. TINA SANDOVAL:

17 Good morning. My name is Tina Sandoval. I am  
18 from Barrio Magas, further up, but I'm, I'm here representing  
19 my mom, who is from Barrio Magas, in Playa, real  
20 close by. My mom lost part of her house during Hurricane  
21 Fiona, now, since... in September. To her... Well  
22 she lost part of her roof. She, she went to FEMA and appl...  
23 applied for help, but to this day, no one has come over  
24 on... on behalf of FEMA to help her. The municipality  
25 gave her an awning, but, unfortunately, she is an elderly

1 person and we have not been able to put up the awning. We can't  
2 find someone who can help us put up the awning.

3 Another thing is that she had to leave Puerto Rico,  
4 because, unfortunately, she could no longer wait.

5 She had to go to work at a factory in order to have  
6 the money to be able to afford the... to be able to put up the  
7 roof. Would she be able to apply for this aid?

8 MRS. MODERATOR:

9 Carlos.

10 PLANNER CARLOS OLMEDO:

11 Yes, yes.

12 MRS. TINA SANDOVAL:

13 Yes. I ask, she has to be away for eight months,  
14 because... Can I be representing her or does  
15 she have to come?

16 MRS. MODERATOR:

17 That's a good question.

18 PLANNER CARLOS OLMEDO:

19 Yes, you can. There are some documents that she would have to  
20 fill out and send to you by email or by regular  
21 mail, but yes, it is possible.

22 MRS. TINA SANDOVAL:

23 Thank you.

24 MRS. MODERATOR:

25 Very good question for those people who are also

1 in the same situation with a family member, right and  
2 who have to do the arrangement. Very good. Well, we leave  
3 the floor open for the mayor So, that he can give us one last  
4 message and say our goodbyes.

5 MAYOR RAÚL RIVERA:

6 First of all, thank you for, for your time, for  
7 giving your time to Guayanilla. We know that there are many  
8 needs. We know that there are many concerns and I believe  
9 that all of them are very valid. I believe that what Rafa  
10 mentioned, I think it is the most, the most significant thing  
11 that we are taking with us today and that is to speed up these  
12 processes, that we should not wait two years, three years more  
13 until we see tangible results. Not to see abstract  
14 results, right. I think that what Harold presented  
15 a while ago, what Aurea presented, I think that, beyond that,  
16 beyond this, it is that one way or the other they should be  
17 informed, be spokespersons, right.  
18 That, that we can carry this message to, to the  
19 communities, So, that we can collect the input. I have a,  
20 a resident in, in Villa del Río. That person doesn't, doesn't  
21 even want their name to be said. That person does not even want  
22 their picture to be taken. That person, I believe, is the  
23 most active community leader that we have in the  
24 municipality, where they visit us weekly with a small piece of  
25 paper in writing and brings us... brings us their

1 recommendations and I tell them, "Come on, come on let's take a  
2 picture," "Never." "Come on, let's go..." "Never. What I want  
3 is for you to give me help" and when a week goes by, three days  
4 go by, it's the first call we receive, which is from them.  
5 And I think that's what makes a community leader  
6 great, who, who moves, as do their colleagues  
7 who are are paying attention to, to, to their communities. I  
8 think that what, that what the, the madam has brought up this,  
9 this morning, it works. We have the  
10 El Faro community, that we are going to relocate and if it  
11 hadn't been for the public nuisances, we would not have been  
12 able to relocate it. Already next week we will receive the  
13 property titles, which in record time, in record time, were  
14 able, were able to be worked on and none of these people  
15 had property titles, but thanks to a  
16 special allocation from the, the governor, well we were  
17 able to ease things and we can adapt them to each  
18 one of your needs.

19 The Barrio Playa, as the lady mentions, yes,  
20 during Fiona, we were able to evidence, we were able to  
21 evidence what the tremors brought us. You may say, "What's  
22 Fiona got to do with the tremors?" Our coastline was lowered  
23 thanks to the tremors and the storm surge penetrated places  
24 where it had never reached before, according to many residents,  
25 and it impacted areas that had never impacted and it brought



1 what it brought. Those are the things we want to bring in, in  
2 the series of questions, of recommendations and be, be  
3 participants as far as the... the earthquake issue.  
4 This meeting is with you. It's easier for me  
5 to sit down with them at a table over there and tell you, "I  
6 I want this, this, this," because I feel like it. No.  
7 They want to hear them. They want you to be  
8 heard and for that message to be the right one. Therefore,  
9 thank you for your participation. We thank the entire  
10 task force that... that is here from the municipality of  
11 Guayanilla, our representative and his task force,  
12 that I believe that, that together we will make a difference  
13 and together, we are going to achieve a healthier  
14 coexistence and a better quality of life. May God  
15 bless you and keep moving forward, because you are the  
16 brave ones. Thank you.

17 MRS. MODERATOR:

18 Thank you, thank you to the mayor, again, for  
19 welcoming us here, in the municipality of Guayanilla, for  
20 insisting that this public hearing be held. We  
21 remind you that we have two additional public hearings already  
22 scheduled for December 14, in Guanica, in the  
23 morning. In the afternoon, we will be in Lajas, and you can  
24 also participate in these public hearings. So  
25 we look forward to seeing you all. If it is necessary to do

1 more meetings, we are going to make them. This is one of the  
2 first approaches we are making and that in the face of this  
3 application process we will continue to build community  
4 per community.

5 So, you know that you can make your comments, either  
6 online as well as in writing, and send us those  
7 comments before December 30, which is the deadline  
8 date for comments on this first action plan  
9 amendment. We therefore conclude this process in this  
10 public hearing on the First Action Plan Amendment Substantial  
11 for the 2019-2020 Earthquakes and 2020 Tropical Storm Isaias  
12 Response under CDBG-DR Funds from  
13 the Department of Housing. We thank,  
14 as I told you, all the assistants for their presence, the  
15 speakers, all the people who expressed, right,  
16 their feelings.

17 We would like to inform you that on the 14th of  
18 December we have those two public hearings. In Guánica it is  
19 at the Club Puertorriqueño, in Ensenada, in Guánica and... at  
20 10:00 in the morning, and at 4:00 in the afternoon, at the  
21 Centro Cultural de Lajas Anastasio Ruiz Irizarry. Thank you  
22 to the mayor and the representative for being present, for  
23 standing up as well for their people and their district. We  
24 thank all of you and So, we finalize our work this  
25 morning.

1 \* \* \*

2

3 THE PUBLIC HEARING WAS ADJOURNED

4 \* \* \*

5

6 STENOGRAPHER'S CERTIFICATE

7

8 I HEREBY CERTIFY that the preceding is a faithful  
9 and correct transcription of the record taken by the  
10 undersigned of the testimony given and the proceedings that  
11 have taken place during this deposition.

12 In San Juan, Puerto Rico, on November 22, 2022.

13

14

15

16

17 DANIEL FIGUEROA SANABRIA

18 STENOGRAPHER:

19

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21

22

23

24

25



This document is a true and accurate translation of the source text.

DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING  
CDBG-DR PROGRAM  
SAN JUAN, PUERTO RICO

RE:

FIRST ACTION PLAN AMENDMENT  
(SUBSTANTIAL) FOR THE 2019-  
2020 EARTHQUAKES AND 2020  
TROPICAL STORM ISAÍAS  
RESPONSE UNDER CDBG-DR FUNDS

PUBLIC HEARING

DATE : December 14, 2022  
TIME : 10:16 a.m.  
CLIENT : DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING CDBG-PR PROGRAM  
ADDRESS : 606 Barbosa Avenue, 8th Floor  
SAN JUAN, PUERTO RICO  
HELD IN : Club Puertorriqueño Ensenada  
Guánica, Puerto Rico

PARTICIPANTS

MODERATOR:

Mrs. Maricarmen Figueroa Correa

PRESIDING TABLE:

Mrs. María Ivette Cabeza Díaz - Associate Secretary for  
Disaster Recovery  
Carlos Olmedo Álvarez, Esq. - Planner and  
Assistant Secretary  
for Planning  
Mr. Carlos Jirau Vélez - Executive Director  
of CONSUR

1           Mr. Ismael Rodríguez Ramos - Mayor of Guánica  
2           Mr. Juan Alberto Santos       - Representative of  
3    the Mayor

4           STENOGRAPHER OF RECORD:

5           Mr. Daniel Figueroa Sanabria

6           SIGN LANGUAGE INTERPRETERS:

7           Mr. Jesús Burgos

8           Mr. Juan Gabriel Díaz

9   \*       \*       \*

10           The proceedings were carried out according to the  
11 following transcription.

12

13           MODERATOR:

14           Greetings to Mayor Ismael "Titi" Rodríguez Ramos,  
15 who, right, has... has welcomed us to this activity  
16 to hold the public hearing regarding the First Substantial  
17 Amendment to the Action Plan for the 2019-2020 Earthquakes  
18 and 2020 Tropical Storm Isaias Recovery Response CDBG-DR  
19 Funds of the Puerto Rico Department of Housing, which  
20 addresses the needs of the affected residents in the  
21 municipalities of Guánica, Guayanilla, Lajas, Mayagüez,  
22 Peñuelas, Ponce, and Yauco.

23           My name is Maricarmen Figueroa, and I am the Assistant  
24 Secretary for the Federal Compliance and

1 Subrecipient Management Division, and today, December 14,  
2 2022, at twenty minutes past ten in the morning, I will  
3 serve as your moderator in this space, Club Puertorriqueño  
4 in Ensenada, Guánica. We are pleased to inform you that we  
5 have the assistance of an English language translator and a  
6 sign language interpreter for the benefit of the community  
7 if needed.

8 We would like to welcome some  
9 special guests. First, Mrs. Marivette  
10 Cabeza Díaz, the Associate Secretary for Disaster Recovery,  
11 Public and Community Affairs Division. Mr. Carlos Olmedo  
12 Álvarez, who is the Assistant Secretary for Planning.

13 We also have Mr. Carlos Jirau, who is Executive  
14 Director of CONSUR. Later we will know what that  
15 is all about. Also in attendance today is  
16 the representative of the mayor, Honorable Ismael "Titi"  
17 Rodríguez Ramos, Mr. Juan Alberto Santos, who is  
18 vice president... who is part of the team of the  
19 Vice President of the Senate and a municipal legislator. We  
20 thank you for welcoming us here in your beautiful  
21 Municipality of Guánica.

22 We would like to thank all of you who have gathered  
23 here this morning on behalf of the Secretary of the  
24 Department of Housing, William Rodríguez,

1 and the Disaster Recovery Deputy Secretary, Maretzi  
2 Díaz Sánchez. We extend our utmost gratitude to all of  
3 you for attending this very important process for the  
4 recovery of the southern part of the island after the  
5 earthquakes. We would also like to thank all the  
6 communications teams, the Federal Compliance team, the  
7 Public and Community Affairs team, and the  
8 Subrecipient Management teams that are present  
9 this morning. We are going to be welcomed by the  
10 mayor's representative, Juan Alberto.

11 MR. SANTOS:

12 Thank you very much. Good morning, everyone. Welcome  
13 to the newly remodeled Club Puertorriqueño of  
14 Ensenada on behalf of our mayor, Ismael "Titi"  
15 Rodríguez, who we hope can, right, join  
16 the proceedings during the day. He is doing  
17 several things as part of his... of his job. Anyway.  
18 Welcome. I hope that this, this public hearing will be  
19 beneficial to everyone. This is a fundamental part of the  
20 commitment our mayor and the administration have  
21 with the... with the reconstruction of our  
22 town. And it is great that our residents can,  
23 can be here and benefit from these programs.

24 We thank the Department of Housing for  
25 having chosen our town to hold this public



1 hearing. I acknowledge our Federal Programs Director  
2 Deryn Núñez, who is also accompanying us on this  
3 morning, and our colleague Jaimiliette Casiano of the  
4 Office of Federal Programs. I hope it is beneficial  
5 to everyone. Good morning and welcome to the  
6 town of Guánica.

7 MODERATOR:

8 Thank you very much for the welcome. It is good  
9 to know that part of the team assigned to the federal funds  
10 of the Municipality of Guánica are present here. The  
11 Department of Housing has convened this public hearing  
12 today, Wednesday, December 14, 2022, with the purpose of  
13 hearing comments and/or suggestions from affected residents  
14 in the municipalities of Guánica, Guayanilla, Lajas,  
15 Mayagüez, Peñuelas, Ponce, and Yauco, in addition to the  
16 public in general.

17 This hearing is part of the federal requirement of  
18 the citizen engagement process to receive comments  
19 on this first amendment to this action  
20 plan. This includes unmet needs following  
21 the passage of Tropical Storm Isaias, a new needs  
22 assessment for the use of the mitigation  
23 funds reserve, and data on public outreach  
24 efforts and the engagement of interested entities  
25 following the release of the original action

1 plan.

2 The original action plan continues to be available  
3 for public review on our website at  
4 <https://www.cdbg-dr.pr.gov/en/>. On the 18th and 29th of  
5 November, public hearing notices were published  
6 in the newspaper El Nuevo Día, pages 45 and 29  
7 respectively, as required by the regulations.

8 Please be advised that this hearing is being  
9 recorded and will later be published on our CDBG-DR Puerto  
10 Rico YouTube channel. I will also share with you  
11 that the public comment acceptance period for  
12 this amendment has been available since November 4,  
13 2022, and has been extended until December 31<sup>st</sup> of this  
14 year. You can visit our website at [https://cdbg-dr.  
15 pr.gov/en/](https://cdbg-dr.pr.gov/en/) to read the first amendment and submit your  
16 comments through the online form or by email,  
17 or the email at [infocdbg@vivienda.pr.gov](mailto:infocdbg@vivienda.pr.gov).

18 You can also send your comments via regular mail  
19 at P.O. Box 21365, San Juan, Puerto Rico 00928-1365.  
20 We also have a form available here today that  
21 you can fill out and add your comment in writing  
22 and submit it today if you do not have access to  
23 the internet or webpages.

24 The rules for the public hearing are as follows:  
25 To guarantee the processes this morning, we want to

1 establish the following rules for a healthy collection  
2 of comments for this action plan. You should have  
3 registered at the entrance to speak and/or to express  
4 your interest during the hearing. The turns will be awarded  
5 on a first-come, first-served basis. I already have a  
6 group of people here who have expressed an interest in  
7 sharing their comments.

8 A five-minute turn will be given to each speaker.  
9 This turn is not transferable to another speaker. Before  
10 speaking, you must identify yourself for registration  
11 purposes. Please indicate your name and town of origin  
12 or the entity to which you belong. The presentation must  
13 be on topics related to the First Substantial Amendment  
14 to the Action Plan for the 2019-2020 Earthquakes  
15 and 2020 Tropical Storm Isaias Recovery Response  
16 CDBG-DR Funds.

17 Each speaker must respect the turns of the others  
18 and must also maintain silence during the public hearing.  
19 The moderator will indicate when it will be your turn.  
20 All persons who are participating in this public  
21 shall promote an environment of respect as we know  
22 this will be the case.

23 Now let us move on to the presentation by  
24 Mr. Carlos Olmedo on this first substantive amendment  
25 and other details about the recovery effort for these

1 municipalities after that onslaught, right, of that... of  
2 that emergency we suffered with the 2019-2020 earthquakes.  
3 So, I leave with you planner and attorney Carlos Olmedo  
4 OLMEDO, ESQ.:

5 I have technical problems. Give me a few minutes  
6 because there is no... either the cable is not working, or  
7 something is wrong. I connected a second computer and it  
8 does not connect either. So, give me a second.

9 MODERATOR:

10 We are live, right, as they say, we are live  
11 and these things happen. So, if you give us five minutes  
12 we will, we will continue with the presentation. Remember,  
13 if you have an interest in expressing yourself, right,  
14 during the hearing, you must notify us so we can add you  
15 to the group of people that will be expressing themselves  
16 after the presentation the colleague's presentation. Give  
us five minutes.

17 (Interval)

18 OLMEDO, ESQ.:

19 Well, we are going old school. Good morning. There is  
20 a problem with the projector so I am going to start talking  
21 about what the presentation is about, and I will go a  
22 little slower explaining more in detail while we resolve  
23 the situation here.

24 Well, this morning we are going to be presenting

1 the first amendment to the CDBG-DR action plan.  
2 We will be talking about CDBG-DR funds, although we are  
3 going to talk a little bit about mitigation, about the  
4 action plan that deals with... Can you hear me? Can you  
5 raise the volume a little? Please, not so much. Like this?  
6 Yes. Okay. Yes, I speak, I speak softly.

7 The action plan for some funds to address  
8 what is in essence the repair and reconstruction of  
9 properties affected by earthquakes. Okay? I will  
10 continue the presentation, but I am going to explain  
11 the...  
12 the particularities of the CDBG-DR funds.

13 These funds received through the federal government,  
14 from the PRDOH federal agency, which is HUD. In this case,  
15 the Government of Puerto Rico received them and it  
16 has also received several different CDBG-DR funds. Today  
17 we are going to talk about CDBG-DR funds, but we will  
18 be focusing exclusively on addressing the situation with  
19 the earthquakes.

20 We already have an approved action plan that was  
21 approved last year, and that action plan established some  
22 thirty-six million that were going to be directed...to be  
23 divided between four municipalities. And it was like that  
24 because when the money was approved, HUD told us that those  
25 thirty-six... eighty-one percent of those thirty-six

1 million had to be used for these four municipalities.

2           So, when you deduct the money for the administration,  
3 office payment, materials, equipment, and other things,  
4 well, there was very little money left to  
5 include more municipalities. The amount left was that  
6 thirty-six million and they were distributed among those  
7 four municipalities, which were Guayanilla, Guánica, Ponce,  
8 and Yauco. Those were the four.

9           Then, as you know, the earthquakes continued  
10 and damage has continued to occur and FEMA has also  
11 been receiving new damage reports. The way this works,  
12 the CDBG-DR funds, which is not FEMA, and I want  
13 to make the difference clear here, when an event occurs,  
14 a hurricane, an earthquake, a, a flood, FEMA is  
15 the agency that goes and takes care of the emergency  
16 situations.

17           It is FEMA, the Federal Emergency Management  
18 Agency, a series of funds come in that address  
19 emergency funds, including FEMA, SBA, 'Rural,'  
20 and there are other special funds. This conglomerate  
21 of, of... this funds package is what address the  
22 emergency and the early stages of disaster  
23 disasters. That is why you hear it being called  
24 "Oficina Estatal Para el Manejo de Emergencias y

1       Administración de Desastres." That is right.

2               This is where all the data on how many properties or  
3       farms, or whatever else, were affected is collected. It is  
4       done eventually; a year or a year and a half has passed  
5       since those funds have been granted, and they evaluate how  
6       much the damage was...that was estimated, that was  
7       evaluated, and how much money was granted for the  
8       reconstruction repair, right. This difference is then  
9       considered, whether they are funds or damages, because that  
10      that difference in damages are non-covered funds. We have  
11      what they gave... what was estimated by FEMA to exist versus  
12      what was given by FEMA. That does not account for  
13      everything that is needed.

14             This is where CDBG-DR funds sometimes come in,  
15      but not always. Depending on the amount, the magnitude  
16      of the event, and so on. So these funds come in, in this  
17      case it was last year, they came in a year and a half  
18      after the events, because that is when they had the  
19      data on what the damages were and how much money  
20      had been granted. And they granted  
21      thirty-six million dollars on top of that difference

22             The earthquakes continued, damages continued,  
23      and then now they are awarding about one hundred  
24      eighty-four million additional dollars. And that  
25      is this meeting. We are holding five different meetings,  
26      five different hearings in five municipalities

1 on the same document, because one hundred  
2 eighty-four million will be added to the original document,  
3 to the action plan that was already approved.

4 So, all of this was nice and pretty, but.... Okay.  
5 On a different note, if I can project the map now then  
6 I will project it, the Mayagüez project is being included.  
7 In this package that HUD sends, that money includes  
8 Mayagüez, not because of an earthquake, but because there  
9 was a tropical storm called Isaias, which caused flooding  
10 and Mayagüez... and then Mayagüez has some seven million  
11 to address this situation.

12 In the action plan, which is the document that  
13 you can... if you have not seen it, you can  
14 see it, it is on our web site, where it is explained  
15 a little more. I am not going to go into too much detail  
16 here about Mayagüez. It is likely we will make a second  
17 amendment to directly address Mayagüez and hold  
18 the public meeting in Mayagüez. Here I will focus  
19 on the earthquakes, because that is what affects  
20 this... this zone.

21 So, all in all everyone can see there.... Let me...  
22 Well, in total we had the thirty-six million that I  
23 I had mentioned, plus the one hundred eighty-four million,  
24 for a total of two hundred and twenty-one million dollars  
25 that are going to be, in essence, except for these seven



1 million from Mayagüez, will be divided between the southern  
2 region.

3 Now, earlier I initially mentioned that there were  
4 four municipalities. Well, now they have added these...  
5 This second cash package that arrived was not  
6 restricted to the four municipalities. So we were able to  
7 add two more municipalities. Peñuelas was added and Lajas.  
8 So, these two hundred twenty-one million minus seven  
9 are going to be used for...two hundred fourteen are  
10 going to be used for these six municipalities.

11 This is a repair and reconstruction program so far  
12 and we are going to talk about that soon, about homes.  
13 No, they cannot be used for commercial spaces.  
14 Okay.

15 So, what are we going to do? Since  
16 we have to modify the action plan that was already  
17 written, the zone's mayors presented a series of  
18 concerns, some ideas to the Secretary of Housing and they  
19 was decided to make some additional modifications to  
20 the document. And as part of these modifications, the  
21 Consorcio del Sur was created. The short name is CONSUR.  
22 It is this organization that is going to bring together  
23 these six municipalities. It will be under the mayors'  
24 board of directors. It will have an executive director, who  
25 is standing there in the back, attorney  
26 Jirau.

1           CONSUR will be the entity in charge of managing the  
2           repair, reconstruction projects, and I am now adding  
3           relocation, and I will explain it right away, for these  
4           funds. Traditionally, up until this point or up until  
5           a month ago, two months, the Department of Housing  
6           was the only entity that managed funds that directly  
7           addressed citizens.

8           The municipalities have CDBG-DR funds allocated  
9           to them, but they are for public infrastructure projects;  
10          municipal infrastructure, roads, bridges, and others.  
11          They have never had a program to work directly with  
12          with people and, in this case, households.

13          This is the first time that money has been awarded to  
14          the municipalities, and since these municipalities are very  
15          close, the municipalities in the zone, in order to avoid  
16          competition between municipalities for the same resources,  
17          because there would be six municipalities bidding to get  
18          construction companies, engineering companies,  
19          right, materials and so on. To avoid that competition  
20          among six municipalities that are very close together, a  
21          group was created, CONSUR, a consortium, and this entity  
22          will make a single contract for all services  
23          for all the municipalities.

24          Centralized funds will be managed. Instead of  
25          having six municipal offices compete for the

1 same thing, we have an office with representatives in each  
2 municipality, an office that will be located in the south  
3 with representatives in each municipality that will address  
4 this situation. And they are closer than us  
5 in San Juan, and so on, and all that mess.

6         Alright, so, this organization was created, it was  
7 created between the six municipalities or the six municipal  
8 legislatures, everything approved, everything official, we  
9 already signed contracts with them. They will receive  
10 administration funds, which I am going to explain to you  
11 right now, money to hire staff here in the southern area,  
12 to rent offices here in the southern area, to purchase  
13 materials and equipment, to have their own office and  
14 manage the reconstruction funds. It will be like this for  
15 the next three, four, five years; the amount of time  
16 the reconstruction process takes for all the properties  
17 and to mobilize and relocate people.

18         And that is something else. That is another  
19 negotiation that took place.

20 Originally, in the plan... relocation was not  
21 in the first action plan. Relocation could be  
22 worked through other mitigation funds that  
23 we have. As part of the negotiation with the  
24 mayors, relocation was added. So CONSUR will  
25 be able to evaluate and process the  
26 relocation cases of independent houses, properties, whether

1 a house cannot stay, right, a  
2 house cannot be rebuilt in this place because, in addition  
3 to the earthquake damage, there are problems with the  
4 terrain or there are problems with...  
5 or it is in a flood-prone area or something,  
6 or an entire community, or part of a community in  
7 a similar situation that must be relocated.

8 So, that did not exist before, now it does. That  
9 mean, that relocation process takes a little bit longer  
10 than the simple process of the repair and reconstruction  
11 of a property. Okay.

12 So, here I am going to talk about.... I am going to  
13 look at the table because there are a lot  
14 of numbers and I am going to... but I am going to  
15 focus here on... What this little table showed was the  
16 difference between the first plan and what we are  
17 proposing in this plan. Well, in the first plan there were  
18 some... as I mentioned, there were about thirty-six  
19 million. Now we are trying to... We received an additional  
20 one hundred eighty-four million and there are two hundred  
21 twenty-one million. Of these two hundred and twenty-one  
22 million, we deduct the seven  
23 from Mayagüez and we are going to have  
24 some two hundred and fourteen million left over.

25 Those millions are divided as follows.  
26 Guánica will have forty-three million. And it is  
27 forty-three million and a little more, but I will  
28 focus on the bigger number. Guánica has

1 forty-three million. Guayanilla has 20.9, almost  
2 twenty-one million. Guánica has 43.1. Lajas has 14.7  
3 million, Peñuelas 15.4 million, Ponce thirty-six  
4 million, 36.0 million, Yauco 34.5 million.

5 Besides that, right, if you add it all up, it still  
6 does not add up to two hundred and fourteen. Besides that,  
7 we have some money that is going to be granted, nine  
8 million, 9.2 million that CONSUR will have. This is what I  
9 said was going to be used for office rent, to set up the  
10 office, materials and equipment, promotional materials, pay  
11 employees, all that.

12 There are seven million for Mayagüez, which I said  
13 were out. There are \$28.8 million that will be used for  
14 mitigation activities. These mitigation activities  
15 can be mitigation activities in properties  
16 or at the community level, and will also be joined to  
17 other mitigation projects that we have as  
18 part of the CDBG MIT funds, which are separate, but that  
19 one exists, that twenty-eight-million-dollar budget for  
20 mitigation activities.

21 And then there is about eleven million, which is  
22 the Department of Housing's budget for paying  
23 part of the program cost, program promotion,  
24 the documentation that you are going to use, the people  
25 the application processes, how they will be managed, right,

1 who are going to come fill out the application form for  
2 you, processing and all that and so on and so forth. So,  
3 we finally have those two hundred and twenty-one million  
4 dollars I had mentioned. Okay.

5 The program is created. I had originally mentioned  
6 the two R's and then I told you that a third R  
7 was added. What is repair, reconstruction and relocation.  
8 And that is going to allow all the... depending on the  
9 magnitude of the damage to the property, to be repaired,  
10 or rebuilt or relocated.

11 Essentially, the difference lies in the condition of  
12 the property, the capacity of the terrain, right, the  
13 conditions of the terrain, whether it is flood-prone,  
14 if the land can withstand flooding, if the house can be  
15 built, and so on. And these are the major costs or the  
16 maximum allocation that each of them can have.  
17 Sixty thousand dollars for rehabilitation. Rehabilitation  
18 is a property that needs to be... something  
19 needs to be fixed, but it is not a major fix.  
20 Something on the property needs to be fixed.

21 One hundred and eighty-five thousand dollars if it  
22 must be rebuilt, and that includes demolition costs.  
23 Because the program covers all costs, including  
24 inspections by certified engineers and licensed  
25 architects, inspections, design,

1 permits. The permit process is fully covered  
2 covered, all permit expenses. If it is necessary to  
3 demolish some part of the property, it is demolished, and  
4 that is also included and the demolition permit and  
5 the permit of... the reconstruction process is included.

6 And if the property must be rebuilt, but it also  
7 must be elevated, up to two hundred and sixty  
8 -five thousand hundred dollars. The elevation process  
9 implies that the property is in a flood-prone area, but  
10 it is in a flood-prone area with low elevation, right,  
11 we are going to elevate it ten feet, if we elevate it  
12 two, three feet, the property can remain in the area  
13 and is taken out of the flood zone.

14 That can be worked on and then you can reconstruct the  
15 property, it is elevated and there is no future problem.  
16 True, we are always guided by the available studies on  
17 the zone's flooding. Like I mentioned earlier,  
18 it is only for households, right, we cannot use  
19 these funds for businesses.

20 The next slide was our website.  
21 We are showing you our website, where you can  
22 search for the information, here is how you do it. You go  
23 to the Department of Housing web site at  
24 [www.vivienda.pr.gov](http://www.vivienda.pr.gov). Once you are on the page, on the  
25 top right-hand side there will be a tab that says

1 CDBG 2017. You click there and you access the  
2 whole CDBG-DR page, CDBG-DR and CDBG-DR Mid.  
3 You can wait a few seconds and you will see a  
4 image related to the program. You will then see that it  
5 says "Public Hearings First Amendment Action Plan  
6 Earthquake." If not, you can go to the tab above that says  
7 "Programs, Action Plan" and when you access the Action  
8 Plan, you are going to see all the action plans. You are  
9 going to see the  
10 action plan for earthquakes, click it and will lead it to  
11 a page that says, "Download documentation," where you can  
12 download and view all the documents. Or it also says  
13 "Submit comments." If you want to submit a  
14 written comment, it can be done in that area.

15 This is the fourth of the five public hearings that  
16 we are holding. The first was on November 28 in  
17 Ponce. The second was on November 29 in Yauco. That  
18 night the ground shook and we were here when it happened.  
19 The other last week, on December 9, was in Guayanilla.  
20 We have this one here in Guánica today and one at four  
21 o'clock in the afternoon in Lajas. We will be in Lajas. So  
22 if you know someone who wants to participate... who wants  
23 to participate in the one in Lajas, anyone can invite  
24 them. It does not matter if they live in another  
25 municipality, they can live in Vieques and can come to Lajas.  
26 There is no problem.



1           And so, now we arrive at the page... to the  
2           comments. I will try to... Let me see if  
3           I can turn this back on. If it works, I have no  
4           problem presenting everything again, but you have already  
5           heard part of it.  
6           Let us see, but you heard part of it, let us see.

7           MODERATOR:

8           Thank you very much, Carlos, for this information.  
9           Although we did not have the benefit of the presentation,  
10          without a doubt the information shared by Carlos  
11          gives us that framework we need to understand where our  
12          efforts are headed following the 2019-2020 earthquakes, to  
13          recover from that... from that situation, from that  
14          emergency.

15          We have a lot of people this morning who have a lot of  
16          interest in expressing themselves. This is very positive  
17          and we thank you again for the space you have reserved for  
18          today. Remember that if you are not interested  
19          in expressing yourself, right, openly  
20          front of everyone, you can leave your comment  
21          on our form. Here it is on the registration  
22          table. Katherine is showing it to us. You can fill out  
23          your information, leave your comment, your suggestion, and  
24          that definitely always helps us and contributes to continue  
25          strengthening these efforts and to address the needs and  
26          the priorities that you have as a community.

1 All right, so, we are going to start with the  
2 first speaker. Mrs. Ruth Vélez from the Municipality of  
3 of Guánica. Come on in. Careful there. I understand  
4 you. The 75th cell phone crash. I understand you.

5 MRS. RUTH VÉLEZ:

6 Alright, a very good morning to everyone.

7 My name is Ruth Vélez Rodríguez.

8 I was affected, because during the earthquakes  
9 I lost my house. I have already listened to the gentleman  
here. Sir?

10 What is your name?

11 OLMEDO, ESQ.:

12 Carlos Olmedo.

13 MRS. RUTH VÉLEZ:

14 Carlos Olmedo, who more or less informed us  
15 about how the funds will be dealt with. I have some  
16 doubts, right, because in my particular case, at least,  
17 I lost my home, but FEMA gave me  
18 thirty-five thousand dollars, which I have  
19 used for housing. But thirty-five thousand  
20 dollars cannot be used to build a house. It is impossible.  
21 The costs of materials is very high and, well,  
22 construction is expensive.

23 So, I wanted to know if by chance, right,  
24 if those same funds, those millions that are being  
25 given to Guanica, can help us finish  
26 the construction that we have already started.

1       Because, well, we already started it and we need to finish  
2       it and, well, we do not have the means, because the loans  
3       are also high. I would like to know if by chance you are  
4       going to help us.

5               From what I can tell, they are going to distribute  
6       those funds by building housing, right, for people and  
7       rebuilding homes. But in our case, which is we have  
8       already started the housing, how could you be able to help?  
9       OLMEDO, ESQ.:

10              Okay. I did not answer that. I did not explain that in  
11       the... in the presentation. They can apply, people who received  
12       funds from FEMA, or a private insurance, or whatever else can  
13       apply. The program does not grant  
14       money to the people, but we do send the... that is, we pay  
15       for the reconstruction. If you have already started some  
16       tasks, an engineer or architect will  
17       inspect the work that has been done and  
18       the work that is needed, and you may qualify  
19       for us to do that work.

20              CDBG-DR does not, as the programs are written,  
21       no money is given to any property owner. The  
22       service is provided, right. And in the case of the  
23       municipalities       that receive approval to       make  
24       infrastructure repairs, in that case

1 that is the service that we pay for. Yes, you can apply,  
2 but it is not that the person is going to receive the  
3 money to work on their own with a contractor to do the  
4 job, rather we are going to bring the contractor  
5 to get the job done.

6 MRS. RUTH VÉLEZ:

7 Exactly. Ah, thank you.

8 MODERATOR:

9 Thank you very much, Mrs. Ruth. I am coming back here.

10 MRS. RUTH VÉLEZ:

11 Have a great day, everyone.

12 MODERATOR:

13 Thank you very much. Thank you for your  
14 participation, Mrs.

15 Ruth Vélez of the Municipality of Guánica.

16 Now we are going to give Mr. Camilo Ramírez

17 of the Municipality of Guánica a turn.

18 Here we are, look, Mr. Camilo. Mr. Camilo, go ahead.

19 MR. CAMILO RAMÍREZ:

20 Good morning to everyone here. She made some  
21 comments which I...

22 MODERATOR:

23 No, no, it is on. Speak up, Mr. Camilo.

24 MR. CAMILO RAMÍREZ:

25 Well, she made some comments and I agree because I  
26 I also lost my house with everything inside. So, FEMA  
27 gave me thirty-five thousand dollars. Then, FEMA demanded  
28 that I

1 start building my house, because if I did not, those  
2 funds were going to be taken away from us. So, we started  
3 to work. I had to use part of my savings.

4 Right now, we are about to pour the roof, but  
5 we do not have enough. And I cannot allow  
6 anyone to come finish my house because I have three people  
7 with a contractor and an engineer, they are the ones who  
8 are working at home. They are the ones who have been there  
9 working all the time. They are supposed to help us, to  
10 give us the help we need to be able to continue and for  
11 these people to continue being the ones building our home.  
12 The person who is building my house was the one who  
13 built it the first time when he was twenty-one years old  
14 and now he is sixty-five years old and is registered by  
15 FEMA and by everyone. He is not a scammer. He is a person  
16 who is registered in DACO and in everything and in the  
17 Department of Treasury. We need that help.

18 Just last Friday there were two strong tremors,  
19 and if we do not pour the roof, all of that work can be  
20 lost because that ceiling... when that ceiling is poured,  
21 it would tie up all that cement so I could finish and  
22 have... and have it strengthened how it is supposed to be.  
23 And how long are we going to wait? Because whenever  
24 we go, it is "next month," "next month."

25 So, using that same amount that FEMA gave me, I had to

1 clean my land. I had to pay for land testing  
2 because the municipality has not helped us  
3 at any point. I am sad to say it, but we have  
4 gone and no. Everything is "next month," next  
5 month," and we have yet to receive no  
6 help. We are fighting hard.

7 If I do not get the funds, then this week I will have to  
8 to tell the boys to sit tight until I can get  
9 them since I was denied a loan by FEMA because  
10 they are not providing for earthquakes anymore. So, what  
11 are we going to do? Because I have a family. Additionally,  
12 I am a cancer patient and I have to make sure  
13 my family is safe. I cannot leave  
14 family, my people, with nothing.

15 This is, for me, this is telling us to be quiet.  
16 With the "next month," "next month." I called the PRDOH,  
17 and last time they told us that the money was in  
18 Guánica. Guánica says no and another one passes  
19 the hot potato. What are we going to do? Let us help each  
20 other.

21 If you want to help us, you can help us by giving,  
22 you have enough, whatever money you want to give us,  
23 because we do not want workforce, because I have the  
24 people. I have three people in my house and  
25 engineer Casiano, who is in charge. He is registered with  
26 everything, we are within the law with the blueprints and

1 everything.

2 I had to do land tests and then I had to remove  
3 the foundations because my house was demolished, but the  
4 foundations were not removed. We have been working here  
5 already and I have always gone there.

6 We have spoken to the mayor and he says "Next month. We  
7 are working on this." I know that he is available whenever  
8 he is needed and we believe him, but we also need to have  
9 the other agencies help us because we are already going on  
10 three years.

11 I am living in a house that is  
12 sixteen feet wide. I have no room for anything.  
13 Everything I had, what little was there, I had to  
14 give away and what I had in the house that I lost, I lost  
15 along with everything inside, because when the FEMA  
16 engineer came, he said, "Do you, sir, understand  
17 English?" and I said, "Yes, why?", "That house moved  
18 six inches to the side, land and all, it must be  
19 demolished."

20 So, when the other engineer that brought the machines  
21 came on Monday, he said the same thing, but with the  
22 machine. And I used the same money and cleaned  
23 my land, excavations were done, it was filled, it was  
24 reinforced. The terrain was fixed up the way it should be,  
25 it was resistant to everything, and a new foundation was  
26 built. The way the construction of the house is going, it  
will

1 endure whatever comes, but we need the funds to finish  
2 it and we cannot do it anymore, we cannot do it anymore.

3 MODERATOR:

4 Mr. Camilo, thank you very much.

5 MR. CAMILO RAMÍREZ:

6 I hope that a miracle happens and we get that help.  
7 We need it urgently, because if not... If I were twenty  
8 years younger, it would be different, but I am already  
9 seventy-nine years old. Which is not easy. And workforce,  
10 you know is very expensive. The construction is very  
11 expensive. When you go buy, to order the cement at  
12 one hundred and twenty dollars per yard of cement. It is  
13 not easy. May God bless you and may you do something for  
14 us.

14 MODERATOR:

15 Thank you, Mr. Camilo.

16 MR. CAMILO RAMÍREZ:

17 And may these words reach the ears of the people  
18 who are involved in this.

19 MODERATOR

20 Thank you, Mr. Camilo. Camilo Ramirez, has similar  
21 comments to Mrs. Ruth, right.

22 It is a property in need. It still has some  
23 unmet needs related to its structure and  
24 how the program is going to address, right, those unmet  
25 needs so these can be resilient and secure homes that you  
can,



1 that you can have. We thank you both for your  
2 comments and all the employees that are present  
3 from the Department of Housing, we also recognize  
4 the presence of Mrs. Laura Rivera Carrión, who  
5 is also part of the HUD team. We take these, we  
6 we take these comments to continue searching for solutions  
7 to these challenges. Let us now open the space to  
8 Mr. José Sanabria of the Municipality of Guánica. Mr. José.  
9 MR. JOSÉ SANABRIA:

10 God bless you all. I am here because of my  
11 condition, because I have problems with my ears. I called  
12 FEMA and I have the documents there so they can help me,  
13 because the big house that I had, the tremors and  
14 Hurricane María, they wreaked havoc on it. Well, with my  
15 condition, I tried to, to seek their help. I called them  
16 since I have a special phone that lets me hear a little  
17 better and they told me they were going to come. They came  
18 and they filled out the paperwork and everything and I am  
19 still waiting for them. They did not help me.

20 I try to... Well, I like to deal with the truth  
21 because I do not deal with lies. I come with the truth. The  
22 good word says that the truth will set you free. And I am a  
23 Christian person, but if you can help me, then amen, if  
24 not, then amen also because when I die, I will not take  
25 anything with me. Just what little I have and enjoy.

1 I came here to see if I could get some help, but if  
2 you can go personally to my house. My phone number is 787-  
3 821-4390. My name is José Sanabria Vega. If you can  
4 help me, then amen, if not, then I will go quietly.  
5 Because there is a lot of corruption in the  
6 government and they are not helping the poor. They deceive  
7 us with their subtlety and they take our names, they fill  
8 out our papers, and then leave us waiting. God  
9 bless all of you and thank you all.

10 MODERATOR:

11 Many thanks to Mr. José Sanabria, who, discussed  
12 this morning his need for the municipality's staff, PRDOH,  
13 HUD; we take that information with us and continue working.  
14 Thank you, Mr. José. We are now opening the space for  
15 Mrs. Onelia Troche of the Municipality of Guánica.

16 MRS. ONELIA TROCHE:

17 From Yauco, from Yauco.

18 MODERATOR:

19 Ah, from Yauco.

20 MRS. ONELIA TROCHE:

21 From Yauco. Good morning, God bless you all.

22 MODERATOR:

23 From the Municipality of Yauco. Excuse us, Mrs.  
24 Onelia, from the Municipality of Yauco.

1 MRS. ONELIA TROCHE:

2 From the coffee town. I, like many others and like  
3 them, also lost my house during the earthquake. FEMA  
4 granted me almost over fifteen thousand dollars, which I  
5 have locked down. The Municipality of Yauco tried to help  
6 me.

7 My house... My house imploded. What do you call it? They  
8 demolished, they demolished it to the ground because of the  
9 danger to the other neighbors.

10 So, the municipality has wanted to help me, but then,  
11 due to the funding cuts, it was not possible. Then, I heard  
12 the gentleman here say that there is a fund. I tried a loan  
13 with FEMA and I did not qualify. I do not know why. I have  
14 continued paying rent. I am paying four hundred and eighty  
15 dollars plus utilities in a small apartment that I got  
16 in Yauco.

17 I have decided that it is no longer possible to  
18 build on my land. Why? Because two engineers came and  
19 a third is needed. These engineers have been paid  
20 with my old woman savings. And not so much because I have  
21 just turned eighty on December 1. You know what I mean?  
22 But I did have my savings for my vacations, which were  
23 pruned.

24 So, it is necessary to build a retaining wall that  
25 will be about twenty thousand dollars, and you have to make  
26 more spaces for soil engineers, since two have already been  
27 done, it is more space much more than what I am asking

1 for. Because he says that there are up to one hundred  
2 eighty-five thousand dollars for building is what you said,  
3 right?

4 OLMEDO, ESQ.:

5 To rebuild.

6 MRS. ONELIA TROCHE:

7 Rebuild, but it will not be possible there because  
8 there is a body of water behind the houses, and they think  
9 that this could have affected mine. My house had two  
10 floors. It had a storm cellar and  
11 the two floors exploded from the basement up. I have never  
12 been the beneficiary of any, any government  
13 program. My whole life I have worked in the United States  
14 and retired in Puerto Rico with my Social Security. And in  
15 twelve minutes I lost forty-two years.

16 I am not asking for anything that I do not think I am  
17 entitled to anything because I am an American citizen, and  
18 because these funds are here for us, right? So, what I am  
19 asking is for is the loan they grant that they talk about  
20 here, and that in my case would be  
21 forty-seven thousand dollars according to this list  
22 here in the papers that the young lady gave us, and the  
23 cooperative that has always taken care of me gives me the  
24 rest for a house I am looking at.

25 So, my question is: can you help people in the  
26 elderly community like me, in our eighties, to get that

1 loan? Because they say it is for a new house. Will it be  
2 for a new home for me? Because mine has already melted.  
3 So, my question is, what is the government going to do for  
4 people like me? Thank you very much.

5 I do not blame any of you because you are what  
6 I was, employed in a public school in the United States.  
7 For that I thank you and it is good that you are taking  
8 care of us a little bit. All right.

9 MODERATOR:

10 Thank you, Mrs. Onelia.

11 MRS. ONELIA TROCHE:

12 Okay. Thank you.

13 MODERATOR:

14 Thanks a million. Jorge, can you assist me here?  
15 Thank you, thank you for coming here, for expressing your  
16 feelings, your need, because we take this information with  
17 us to with us to continue working and looking for  
18 solutions. We will now open the space for  
19 Reverend Rosalina Guzmán from the Municipality of  
20 Guánica. Yes.

21 REV. ROSALINA GUZMÁN:

22 Good morning to everyone. Like the young lady said, I  
23 I am the Presbyterian Reverend Rosalina Guzmán from right  
24 here, Ensenada. So, we have already heard all the  
25 concerns of these seniors. I have a question for you.  
26 According to what was heard from the

1 attorney, are the municipalities not going to administer  
2 any of these funds that you offer?

3 OLMEDO, ESQ.:

4 This program will be administered by the  
5 municipalities.

6 REV. ROSALINA GUZMÁN:

7 Will they be administered by the municipalities?

8 OLMEDO, ESQ.:

9 These funds, the repair, reconstruction,  
10 and rehabilitation part of... excuse me, reparation,  
11 reconstruction, and relocation of homes due to the  
12 earthquakes will be administered by a...  
13 a municipal consortium. They are a group of  
14 municipalities that have joined together and created this  
15 agency that responds to the municipalities, but not every  
16 municipality, rather the collaborating municipalities  
17 collectively called CONSUR.

18 CONSUR already has its executive director. He is  
19 recruiting staff right now to meet the  
20 different, right, to have staff in every municipality  
21 and staff in their offices. They will establish offices.  
22 They are the ones who are going to be with us, but the ones  
23 that will manage the process of gathering the  
24 data, outreach, meaning giving it more promotion, which  
25 I am going to talk about soon. I am going to mention  
26 something about this because  
27 a someone made a comment to me just now, gathering  
28 information about people and everything regarding the

1 processing of applications to selection,  
2 right, to the allocation of funds to each individual  
3 that qualifies. Yes, the money goes to... the fund, the  
4 program is going to be managed by an entity that represents  
5 the six municipalities here in the south.

6 REV. ROSALINA GUZMÁN:

7 Excellent. The other question is whether this  
8 consortium that will manage those funds, and you said that  
9 they will oscillate between sixty thousand, one hundred and  
10 eighty thousand, and approximately two hundred thousand, no,  
11 I do not have the number, in the case of, for example, someone  
12 said that... A brother said that his reconstruction already  
13 began.

14 How does that work? So, if a person has already  
15 started to rebuild their house and that fund will be  
16 managed, I am going to say by you or by the  
17 people who have to manage it, how will the person  
18 know that their reconstruction has already begun? how will  
19 they apply to receive these funds that you offer?

20 OLMEDO, ESQ.:

21 Okay, okay. You divided the question into two parts  
22 and I am going to answer them because I think will help  
23 clarify the application process, and both parts deserve a  
24 thorough explanation. So let me take it slowly and I will  
25 answer everything, and if I miss something, then let me  
26 know.

1 REV. ROSALINA GUZMÁN:

2 Very good.

3 OLMEDO, ESQ.:

4 Okay. Let me stand up. The application process.  
5 We look forward to coming to... We are... Right, now during  
6 Christmas, the process becomes a little slower,  
7 but we hope to be in all  
8 six Municipalities with CONSUR staff already recruited by  
9 February, all our staff here, staff from our different  
10 offices because there are other programs  
11 around that are not... that do not... There are other  
12 programs such as the one that the woman mentioned,  
13 and I want to talk to her separately because  
14 I do not have staff from that program available to  
15 explain in detail, but I will explain a little bit  
16 separately.

17 We will be visiting each one of the six  
18 municipalities and we can have more than one visit.  
19 It is like a type of fair where that we are going to  
20 promote more.  
21 We will explain this and all the programs in more detail  
22 and we are going to start giving you information about  
23 what documents you need to have ready to be submit your  
24 application. And in two to three weeks' time, we are going  
25 to start the application process.

26 Although this application process will be for the  
27 program, CONSUR will be leading the process.

28 So, it is through CONSUR and the municipalities



1 that communities will be chosen for a visit, the  
2 days, and all that sort of thing. So, the Department of  
3 Housing here is providing assistance to this  
4 organization, but it is the same standardized process.

5 It is the same regulated process that we have  
6 used for... the same that we have used for other  
7 federal funds and other similar programs. So that  
8 is going to be fairly standardized.

9 The situation you bring up in the question you are  
10 asking me or that you are asking,  
11 the point you are making about the properties  
12 that have already been... whose construction has already  
13 begun, I am not an engineer, but I am going to explain  
14 what process is to you. Yes, I want everyone to hear it  
15 because it is a very particular process. This type of fund  
16 requires us to use certified engineers, be they  
17 licensed, licensed architects.

18 The people who will be participating in the process of  
19 inspection, design, obtaining permits, and everything else,  
20 are not so-and-sos who have been building for many years,  
21 contractors who do not have... who do it because they are  
22 experienced, or because they learned  
23 from their dads, or they learned from someone else.  
24 They are people who have the licenses to work.

25 If you started a repair because FEMA  
26 gave you the money to make that repair, and you started  
27 because you needed to live in the house, and to repair it,  
28 and so on.

1        Fantastic. To please apply. Do not get left out of the  
2        application process because of that.

3        The program also sends inspectors to inspect the house  
4        thoroughly.

5                Complicated situations can happen. And that is why  
6        that amount of money is there. When the  
7        engineer or the architect inspects the house, it was built  
8        based on a blueprint, the blueprint does not exist, the  
9        blueprint was lost, and it is not clear  
10       where the columns are located, or what  
11       materials were used for the construction, which rebars  
12       were used in the foundations, right, that kind of thing.

13               If the house needs coating because it has  
14       cracked load-bearing walls, or part of the ceiling was  
15       cracked and so on, there is a question of how to calculate  
16       if the house is suitable, if the house can support the new  
17       weight that will be put on it, the weight of the roof, or  
18       the coating that it may get. So, sometimes the option  
19       is... the sound option is to demolish that part of the  
20       the house, or the house itself, and rebuild a new house  
21       because we do not want to put more weight on a structure  
22       that we do not know whether it can withstand another,  
23       another quake because it is already affected.

24               So, if people have no blueprints, if, when the house  
25       was built, the person built it informally,  
26       that he simply had it built, "I hired José,  
27       who builds everything in the whole neighborhood, he is the

1 one who built my house," but there is no document that  
2 tells you how the house was built, no engineer or  
3 architect is going to put his license on the line by  
4 certifying a repair on a structure with an unknown  
5 construction history.

6 So, that slows down the process. This does not mean  
7 that the house does not qualify for the process, but it  
8 makes the process require demolition and reconstruction of  
9 part of the structure. And that is why those costs are  
10 there. And you say, "Wow, a two hundred-and-sixty-five-  
11 thousand-dollar check. That is a mansion."

12 The process is expensive because the process is  
13 formal. Everything is paid for; the entire blueprinting  
14 process, the creation of plans, permits. If it must be  
15 demolished, there is a demolition plan, a demolition  
16 permit. The machines that are going to demolish it. If the  
17 house is old, it must be tested for asbestos and lead. All  
18 of that is covered by us.

19 It is not that easy. That is why I tell you that we do  
20 not give the money to the person so that the person  
21 can continue to rebuild, because we want to avoid  
22 situations like the house having an error in the  
23 original construction process. The mistake gets  
24 perpetuated, and with another earthquake, or  
25 hurricane, or whatever, the structure suffers again.

26 So that is why the process is the way it is and is so

1 expensive. Because we pay for a house that is supposed to  
2 endure everything thrown at it. Of course,  
3 nothing is infallible. Did I answer everything?

4 REV. ROSALINA GUZMÁN:

5 You answered me because no, I am not the one who needs  
6 the service.

7 OLMEDO, ESQ.:

8 But you are the spokesperson.

9 REV. ROSALINA GUZMÁN:

10 No, I am asking the questions so that all these people  
11 who are here can get the idea. Me, as a  
12 community leader, my interest is... In fact, I lived in  
13 Ensenada and now I live in Cabo Rojo because my home was  
14 demolished, but that is another matter because it is  
15 private. But look, I want to be sure that you are telling  
16 us that everyone here can apply for these benefits. That is  
17 the first thing, they can apply for these benefits, it  
18 has been delayed and now they can start from scratch. Are  
19 you going to have staff people can go to and  
20 receive help from so they can start from scratch?

21 Because look, the earthquakes happened a long time  
22 ago, and look at where we are still. Like the woman  
23 said, I know that you are not at fault because this is  
24 a whole procedure. That said, look, anyone can

1 get excited. Look, I am excited. But if you tell me that  
2 an elderly person here is going to receive the...  
3 I know that there are permits and all those things that  
4 sixty thousand can rebuild, one hundred and eighty thousand  
5 can build a new house, and with two hundred-odd thousand  
6 you can build a mansion.

7 Now, I understand that this includes all the permit  
8 paperwork and all those things that cost a lot of money.  
9 However, I am a little more relaxed leaving this place  
10 because I understand that you are going to work.

11 OLMEDO, ESQ.:

12 Take it slow because you are giving me a lot of topics  
13 and I am lagging behind, I get confused. Okay. Everyone who  
14 is here can apply. The process is... Yes, tell me.

15 MR. CAMILO RAMÍREZ:

16 You say you have to have the engineers, blueprints,  
17 everything. I have my blueprints, I have engineer Casiano,  
18 I have a person who has been building for years who is  
19 contractor. And the one who is building my house for me  
is a  
20 contractor who has worked with FEMA, he is registered with  
21 DACO. There is no problem there. So (speaks  
22 off-microphone). Then, someone else must come and  
23 finish my house. I do not want anyone better.

24 OLMEDO, ESQ.:

25 Everyone here can apply.

1 True, there is a qualification process. Part of the  
2 requirements is that it be... that it be a home that is  
3 lived in or has been lived in.

4 It cannot be a vacation home,  
5 summer, or anything like that, right. There are certain  
6 established requirements, but yes everyone, please apply.  
7 Tell your neighbors, tell the people, the people who attend  
8 your church, the people you walk with in the  
9 park. Every person who was affected, whether  
10 they received or qualified for  
11 funds through FEMA or another agency, please apply.

12 This is very important. About, about the delay or the  
13 time, like I tried to explain at the beginning, maybe I  
14 was not sufficiently clear, well, these funds,  
15 CDBG-DR funds happen to not be emergency funds. They  
16 follow the emergency funds, they are granted, and then  
17 we have a clear picture.

18 These are medium or long-term recovery  
19 funds. So, the funds always arrive a year or a year and  
20 a half, two years later. So, we are....

21 We recognize that many years have passed, but  
22 these funds have arrived now because they will cover  
23 what was not covered, right, by the previous funds.

24 And maybe time, well, it does not help you, right, and I  
25 I understand the situation, but that is the way the  
26 program is designed. I cannot tell you "I am going to have

1 money available next week" because that is not how it  
2 works, and I am not going to say yes just to lie to you, am  
3 I?

4 MRS. RUTH VÉLEZ:

5 What I wanted to ask you was...

6 MODERATOR:

7 Yes, Mrs. Ruth.

8 MRS. RUTH VÉLEZ:

9 What I wanted to ask you was, at least in the  
10 case, in my case, I will not be able to  
11 get any help because my house has already been started on.  
12 So, I would have...

13 MODERATOR:

14 Mrs. Ruth, Mrs. Ruth, no, no, no, you will not have  
15 that answer until we go through the application and  
16 qualification process. So, I do not know... do not deny  
17 yourself.

18 MRS. RUTH VÉLEZ:

19 No, but I just...

20 MODERATOR:

21 We have to get to that... As we say in the  
22 countryside, we have to get to the puddle to see  
23 if we can cross it.

24 MRS. RUTH VÉLEZ:

25 Right, but since he said that if  
26 the house is already started then no money will be granted.  
27 They will simply send the contractors.

1 OLMEDO, ESQ.:

2 No, no.

3 MRS. RUTH VÉLEZ:

4 You said that. That you were going to send it to the  
contractors and that...

5 MODERATOR:

6 Yes, no money will be awarded whether it has started  
7 or not.

8 OLMEDO, ESQ.:

9 (speaks off-microphone).

10 MODERATOR:

11 Excuse me, Carlos. ...because people will not  
12 be granted money. What you are going to be granted is a,  
13 a... a, a... a group, a team of professionals that  
14 will evaluate your property and make the necessary repairs  
15 and reconstructions that your property may need after that  
16 evaluation and each, each property is a world unto itself.

17 MRS. RUTH VÉLEZ:

18 Right.

19 MODERATOR:

20 It must be evaluated...

21 MRS. RUTH VÉLEZ:

22 Right.

23 MODERATOR:

24 ...but nobody is given money, whether it has



1 started or not. The help is through rebuilding their house.

2 MRS. RUTH VÉLEZ:

3 Right, but if the house is already started, it  
4 means no...

5 MODERATOR:

6 It has been started, but it still has unmet...

7 MRS. RUTH VÉLEZ:

8 Ah, well.

9 MODERATOR:

10 ...needs. Right?

11 MRS. RUTH VÉLEZ:

12 Sure. Yes.

13 MODERATOR:

14 We have to wait for that evaluation. We have to  
15 wait. We have to apply and we have to wait for that  
16 evaluation and address the unmet needs. Of course.

17 MRS. RUTH VÉLEZ:

18 Ah, so they are coming to...

19 MODERATOR:

20 Excuse me, Mr. Camilo.

21 MRS. RUTH VÉLEZ:

22 ...they would come? Would that group of employees  
23 come?

24 MODERATOR:

25 That group would come.

1 MRS. RUTH VÉLEZ:

2 Aha.

3 MODERATOR:

4 Everyone here must apply. Are you going to deny  
5 yourself?

6 MRS. RUTH VÉLEZ:

7 Ah, well, no.

8 MODERATOR:

9 Of course not. As soon as the applications start,  
10 everyone should apply. Where are we going to  
11 apply? Attorney Carlos Jirau is going to tell you a little,  
12 a little later. Mr. Camilo, tell me quickly so I can  
13 continue with the rest of the people.

14 MR. CAMILO RODRÍGUEZ:

15 So, do I have to tell people at home "Go away. I do  
16 not need you anymore"?

17 MODERATOR:

18 No, Mr. Camilo.

19 MR. CAMILO RODRÍGUEZ:

20 But they are the ones who are working.  
21 Because if others come to finish (speaks off- microphone).

22 MODERATOR:

23 No, it is necessary to evaluate. Remember, we have to  
24 evaluate what is, what is... right,

1 unfinished first. Evaluate first. OK? I would like to  
2 take the moment to acknowledge the presence of the Mayor  
3 Ismael "Titi" Rodríguez Ramos, who accompanies us this  
4 morning and joins the proceedings. A brief greeting to you,  
5 mayor.

6 HON. MAYOR:

7 Yes, greetings to everyone. Good morning. Welcome,  
8 residents of our town of Guánica and the entire work team,  
9 to the Department of Housing orientation at the Club  
10 Puertorriqueño. And it is good, right, that these meetings  
11 take place. They are part of the requirements,  
12 right, of the CDBG-DR funds so that you can  
13 hear firsthand the requirements and how they work  
14 to, right, approve the aid that will be  
15 available here. Hopefully soon, right.  
16 And I am listening.

17 I also understand the frustration of each and every  
18 one of you. I said and emphasized to many of you that  
19 you should be here today for that very reason, so that you  
20 could get informed and see the processes.  
21 I understand the frustration. Many  
22 of you live in, in rented housing right now  
23 or with your relatives. You have not had an easy time.  
24 It has been almost three years since the earthquakes, but  
25 these are federal money processes that must meet certain  
26 requirements.

27 As he rightly says, it is not something that....  
28 It is money

1 that meets, right, that money we have for an  
2 emergency, but obviously a home could not be built,  
3 not much could be done. Well, that is what this money is  
4 for, right, to rebuild homes. We  
5 are working with a consortium, right, together with the  
6 neighboring mayors, with Yauco, Guayanilla,  
7 Peñuelas, Ponce. Lajas also joined.

8 We will be collaborating with the Department of  
9 Housing, working together on that. And what  
10 we want is for this to start soon and to give  
11 the people the help to rebuild their homes in  
12 our town and to work on a case-by-case basis.

13 All these concerns, Ruth's concerns,  
14 Ruth, Mr. Camilo's concerns, the concerns of  
15 many of you speaking with Carlos Jirau, you  
16 know that I have also taken them into the meetings with the  
17 Department of Housing, because in our town of  
18 Guánica, compared to, for example, the town of  
19 Yauco, well, it is more on a case-by-case than on a global  
20 basis.

21 The people of Yauco, well, they have one, right,  
22 idiosyncrasy, they have more available land.  
23 In our case, we are more limited.  
24 It would be specific land belonging to people or  
25 identifying some other type of land as a public nuisance,  
and all that. Whether it entails relocation and whether

1 we give people the alternative of some new land if they  
2 cannot build on the land where the demolition was done or  
3 carried out.

4 So, thanks to the Department of Housing for  
5 this orientation. I am here and I will be listening to the  
6 suggestions or the amendments you present and hoping,  
7 as a mayor, that this aid will begin to arrive soon  
8 so we can see the reconstruction of homes in our  
9 "guaniqueño" town.

10 MODERATOR:

11 Many thanks to the mayor. Thank you for being with  
12 us this morning. The presence of the mayor is definitely  
13 important. That support from the mayor for the different  
14 communities. So, we thank you for being here. We will  
15 continue with the people who were interested in expressing  
16 themselves. We will open the space now to Mrs. Felícita  
17 Pabón from Ensenada, Guánica. There. Thank you.

18 MRS. FELÍCITA PABÓN:

19 Good morning. My question is... Yes, my question  
20 is, when are we going to start the demolition process  
21 and how long it would take to demolish the rest of the  
22 properties?

23 MODERATOR:

24 Yes, I will give the floor to the mayor.

1 MR. MAYOR:

2 The demolition process is being covered by the  
3 municipality directly with funds granted to us by  
4 the Department of Housing. I would like  
5 to... I have some colleagues there, administrator  
6 Omar Pacheco. He should take your information to verify  
7 with the, also with the Office of Federal Programs, Deryn is  
8 over there, to check the status. We had a demolition  
9 backlog.

10 We have also explained homes that have tested positive  
11 for asbestos or lead to many of you.

12 A second auction has already been awarded. Of the first  
13 sixteen homes to be demolished because of asbestos or  
14 lead, a first auction has already been awarded.

15 Of the first sixteen housing units to be  
16 demolished with asbestos or lead, the company that was  
17 awarded the contract already submitted the permits to  
18 Natural Resources. This is supposed to be ready  
19 in the next... in the coming weeks. We expect that  
20 these demolitions should start operating normally by January  
21 and our goal is to have eighty or ninety percent of these  
22 houses completely demolished by June 2023.

23 MRS. FELÍCITA PABÓN:

24 Demolished.

1 MR. MAYOR:

2 Demolished.

3 MRS. FELÍCITA PABÓN:

4 Okay. And one more question. After the demolition,  
5 how long for those who qualify for the home construction  
6 process?

7 MODERATOR:

8 Carlos.

9 OLMEDO, ESQ.:

10 Okay. We look hope to come, we look forward to the  
11 whole the team coming back, CONSUR, PRODH, and, and the  
12 contractors, in February.

13 We are planning to come at some point in February  
14 and make... promote to the program more, explain  
15 the program more, the application requirements, and so  
16 forth, and what the different steps would be.

17 MRS. FELÍCITA PABÓN:

18 Aha.

19 OLMEDO, ESQ.:

20 Then getting the applications from that point forward  
21 forward

22 MRS. FELÍCITA PABÓN:

23 Okay.

24 OLMEDO, ESQ.:

25 Applications are not going to be open for one day.  
26 They will be open one, two, three months. So there will be

1 enough time. So do not worry about that. You do not have  
2 to feel rushed to do it. Once that happens,  
3 the process of re-evaluation of applications and  
4 initial inspection begins.

5 MRS. FELÍCITA PABÓN:

6 Uh-huh.

7 OLMEDO, ESQ.:

8 And the initial inspection process is the one that  
9 I mentioned a while ago, an architect or an engineer is  
10 going house to house and assesses the condition of the  
11 house. And then you can see whether it is a house that  
12 qualifies for reconstruction, for repair, reconstruction,  
13 or rehabilitation, and the process continues.

14 MRS. FELÍCITA PABÓN:

15 Okay.

16 OLMEDO, ESQ.:

17 It is a long process...

18 MRS. FELÍCITA PABÓN:

19 Uh-huh.

20 OLMEDO, ESQ.:

21 ...because, of course, the documentation must be  
22 evaluated. Occasionally, an engineering team from another  
23 reconstruction program we have goes and does  
24 something like an x-ray of the property to see its  
25 structure, where the columns are located and other



1 details.

2 MRS. FELÍCITA PABÓN:

3 Uh-huh.

4 OLMEDO, ESQ.:

5 Sometimes soil studies are required. All  
6 these permits are submitted, and so on,  
7 the blueprint is submitted for construction. We already  
8 we have blueprints pre... that is, approved.

9 MRS. FELÍCITA PABÓN:

10 Uh-huh.

11 OLMEDO, ESQ.:

12 If the house can use one of these approved  
13 blueprints because the entire house will be rebuilt,  
14 well, it makes it easier, right, it moves the process  
15 forward a little bit.

16 MRS. FELÍCITA PABÓN:

17 Okay.

18 OLMEDO, ESQ.:

19 But if it is a house that will have part of the house  
20 demolished and another other part that stays, then the  
21 blueprint is exclusive to that section of the house that  
22 will be rebuilt, right.

23 MRS. FELÍCITA PABÓN:

24 Okay.

25 OLMEDO, ESQ.:

26 So that makes it be delayed a little bit longer.

25

1 MRS. FELÍCITA PABÓN:

2 Uh-huh.

3 OLMEDO, ESQ.:

4 This is not a short process, it is not a quick  
5 process.

6 MRS. FELÍCITA PABÓN:

7 Uh-huh.

8 OLMEDO, ESQ.:

9 I am being very honest with you.

10 MRS. FELÍCITA PABÓN:

11 Okay.

12 OLMEDO, ESQ.:

13 But if you can check our website, there are  
14 samples of the houses that have been built and those that  
15 have been repaired, so that you can see the detail of  
16 what has been... of what has been done. I can try to  
17 make it so we bring, right, photos and  
18 videos of these properties.

19 MRS. FELÍCITA PABÓN:

20 Okay.

21 OLMEDO, ESQ.:

22 One thing I would like to mention is that I was asked  
23 a question last week and I do not know, we have not  
24 answered it. That mean, we answered it last week and it has  
25 not been asked. But those people who have a problem with  
26 ownership, we have a program that helps obtain the

1 title. Please, do not stop applying because the house  
2 was inherited or because you do not have the title for the  
3 house you live in. Participate, apply. That is one of the  
4 questions that they are going to ask you and then your case  
5 is transferred to this program we have to help you obtain  
6 ownership. Okay? It is very important.

7 MRS. FELÍCITA PABÓN:

8 Well, thank you very much. Good morning.

9 MODERATOR:

10 Thank you very much, Mrs. Felícita. I will repeat  
11 that. I will repeat it in simple terms. Carlos says  
12 it very formally, I say it in simple terms.  
13 Look, first, I will repeat two things. First, that on  
14 the registration desk there is a form for people  
15 who would like to leave a comment. If you do not want  
16 to do it here in public, to share it with all of us, you  
17 can do so in writing and leave it with us. The form is  
18 there  
19 the registration desk.

20 And all the people who have problems with  
21 ownership, then... Well, not you, your property.  
22 Right, your property has ownership problems, that it  
23 should not be an obstruction, right, for you to submit  
24 your application to this program. You submit your  
25 application and at some point you will be asked for the  
26 ownership documentation of your property and you are going  
to say, you will

1 raise his hands and say "This is as far as I go.  
2 You have to help me with ownership."

3 The Title Clearance Program under CDBG-DR will  
4 will help clarify the ownership situation of your  
5 title. OK? Everyone understood now, right? That is why I  
6 say that I say it in simple terms. Very good. So, let us  
7 continue with Mr. Andrés Vega of the Municipality of  
8 Guánica. Andrés Vega, did he leave? He had registered to,  
9 to share information. We also have Dennise Colón. We give  
10 our colleague the floor.

11 MRS. DENNISE COLÓN:

12 Good morning, everyone. Welcome to those who came from  
13 other towns, right. I am greatly surprised that I do not  
14 I see a lot of people here, because this town has been  
15 affect the most. We have all... Pardon me? Can you hear me,  
16 can you hear me? Okay.

17 No problem, I am going to repeat it. Good morning and  
18 welcome to everyone present, right, from other towns.  
19 Welcome to our Town of Friendship, the eternal summer.  
20 Really, this town, I believe that we are still the driest  
21 town in Puerto Rico, we are the poorest town, very  
22 destroyed. Whoever comes here cries, the people that visit  
23 us.

24 And unfortunately, no one here is to blame because that

1 is how it is. It was because of nature, but I see  
2 hope, I really do. I think they will help us and  
3 I was very pleased to hear that they are going to evaluate  
4 the houses, that they are going to conduct a soil survey.  
5 My house has not been demolished. Lead was found in it.

6 Our entire street was destroyed. The mayor is a  
7 witness to that. I do not know if it is possible  
8 to build a house there again. But I also love to hear  
9 that only part of the house might be demolished if the  
10 evaluation shows that the other part of it can stay since I  
11 had previously been told no. Because about five engineers  
12 have been to my house. Even a structural one. I called the,  
13 the College of Engineers and they said no, he was not a  
14 structural engineer. He had to give me the money back,  
15 three thousand two hundred dollars. Okay.

16 Anyway. My questions have been answered with what  
17 the people have said and asked here. Thank you very much.  
18 Thank you very much for being here and giving us hope.

19 MODERATOR:

20 Thank you very much for coming. To address your  
21 observation regarding how everyone that should be here is  
22 not necessarily here this morning. We ask you, and the  
23 reverend who is also a community leader, to spread the

1 word. Right, to everyone here, to spread the word. Right,  
2 the processes and recovery efforts began after the  
3 earthquakes.

4 We will have the application process up  
5 early next year. So we have to spread the word so that all  
6 those who need it can apply for and benefit from this ...  
7 from this recovery effort. So we are counting on all of you  
8 to help spread the word. To help us to spread the word so we  
9 can all benefit. Thank you, Dennise. Mr. Luis Rodríguez of  
10 the Municipality of Mayagüez.

11 MR. LUIS RODRÍGUEZ:

12 Good morning. Greetings, everyone. My name is Luis  
13 Rodríguez. I am mostly here to offer my services.  
14 Although I am a resident of Yauco, just like, yes, everyone  
15 present here, I suffered the ravages of earthquakes.  
16 The company I work for is a non-profit organization  
17 dedicated to the development of housing and social interest  
18 housing.

19 Right, I want to offer my services to the mayor  
20 of Guánica, as well as to all the mayors of the  
21 municipalities described previously, to the Department of  
22 Housing or HUD to, well, to do our part as well and to see  
23 how we can offer our help to the recovery of this  
24 entire southern area. We have seventeen years of experience

1 developing social interest housing.

2 We have worked with federal programs such as CDBG,  
3 HOME program, tax credits. As of today, we have managed and  
4 developed nearly some four hundred units with close to  
5 sixty million in, in investment dollars for all these  
6 units. So anyway, my company is available to you and we are  
7 at your service.

8 MODERATOR:

9 Thank you. The name of the...?

10 MR. LUIS RODRÍGUEZ:

11 The entity is called INDESOVI, better known by, right,  
12 its initials, but the full name is "Instituto para  
13 el Desarrollo Socioeconómico y de Vivienda de Puerto Rico".

14 MODERATOR:

15 Excellent. Luis has also been with us at the meet  
16 and greet at the Municipality of Ponce and in our other  
17 initiatives. Sometimes we work on our own and we have  
18 to continue include, right, these aids and to benefit  
19 the communities we have. So, thank you, Luis, because you  
always show up wherever we call you and make yourself  
20 available. Thank you.

21 I want to take the moment now to ask if there is

1 any other person who has registered to speak out  
2 during this morning. I look over there at the registration  
3 area and we are finished. Well, we have provided the  
4 opportunity to all those people who wanted to do it in a  
5 public way.

6 We remind you that we have a written version  
7 at our registration desk so that you can express yourselves.  
8 We have a gentleman here. Since you had not registered, your  
9 name and the municipality you from are very important.

10 MR. RAFAEL GÓMEZ:

11 Yes, good morning to everyone. My name is Rafael  
12 Gómez Román. I live in Yauco right now. I have already  
13 moved four times. I was the person who applied to PRDOH  
14 on August 6 and they sent me a letter on the first  
15 saying the mayor is aware of all this.

16 The problem for us is that whenever FEMA  
17 asks us questions, the first thing they ask about is our  
18 income and through income, they always reply that we are  
19 not eligible for everything. It has happened to me from the  
20 beginning, I had to move out of my house because house was  
21 destroyed. My house is a house over two hundred thousand  
22 dollars and right now during this thing that happened, now  
23 I applied FEMA's aid and was told no because unfortunately  
24 because of the income.



1           That is the problem that almost all of us have here in  
2           the town of Guánica. The last thing we are asked is what  
3           our incomes are and then they send you a letter saying that  
4           you are not eligible. Thank you all very much.

5           MODERATOR:

6           Thank you very much for also expressing your concern,  
7           what your experience has been like so we can also take that  
8           information. The colleague.

9           MRS. MARGARITA:

10           Yes, my name is Margarita, and I am from here, from  
11           Guánica. Okay. Look, I am in... I live in Valle Tania near  
12           a foundation. My house is, well, messed up. Can I apply?  
13           Foundation. There are a lot of us here.

14           MR. MAYOR:

15           (Speaks off-microphone).

16           MRS. MARGARITA:

17           Yes, I can apply. And another little thing, CRIM  
18           charged me a thousand dollars and I am about to receive  
19           seven hundred now on January if I have not received it yet.

20           MR. MAYOR:

21           (Speaks off-microphone).

22           MRS. MARGARITA:

23           Yes, I went to Guánica and I was very grateful. They  
24           discounted three dollars. Very grateful. In other words,  
25           can I request to have that house fixed up for me?

1 OLMEDO, ESQ.:

2 Of course.

3 MODERATOR:

4 We thank Mrs. Margarita for her question. To  
5 all those who have also received aid not from FEMA, but  
6 from other foundations or other entities to support the  
7 reconstruction of their homes and that still have  
8 unmet needs, you may also apply, right, when we are in the  
9 application process at the beginning of coming year.

10 Very good. So, I am going to open the space to  
11 attorney Carlos Jirau, executive director of CONSUR, so  
12 he can tell us, he can tell us the... he can share  
13 the comments he is going to share with us this morning.  
14 Yes, yes, go ahead.

15 JIRAU, ESQ.:

16 Good morning, everyone. Attorney Carlos Jirau  
17 is addressing you now. I am the executive director  
18 appointed by the mayors of the southern region to lead the  
19 consortium that you have been hearing about throughout this  
20 morning.

21 I will give you a brief account of how we got  
22 to the point where we are now and try to clarify some  
23 doubts about some of the issues you have raised. I also  
want to... Let us talk about technical aspects and then

1 I am going to ask for a little bit of patience because it  
2 is very important that the plan being discussed with you  
3 today reflects your needs and later gives us the ability,  
4 when the consortium starts executing, to carry out the  
5 projects.

6 Those things that are not included in this stage and  
7 are included as part of the eligible activities of the  
8 action plan; if you present a situation like that and it is  
9 not included, then it entails an indefinite process to carry  
10 it out, like the woman that was just here was saying. So,  
11 adding to what our colleagues from the Department of Housing  
12 have been talking about, we are here today, but we have  
13 until the end of the month to submit comments.

14 In other words, take the message to your communities,  
15 neighbors, friends, not only those from Guánica, but also  
16 from the neighboring towns, so you can present your  
17 situations through the PRDOH website or through the  
18 municipalities themselves. Your individual experiences,  
19 many of which have been discussed here today, can give us  
20 ideas on how to address cases.

21 We often have an idea of what an eligible activity is  
22 and what we want to do, but there are particular  
23 events, like the ones you have talked about throughout this  
morning, that may be lost in the process, and that is

1 very important. So I ask you to please carry the message  
2 to your neighbors, friends, colleagues, and of all the  
3 neighboring towns and Guánica, to raise your concerns, to  
4 raise your situations, to raise your particularities.

5 For example, what happened to me when I applied? Why  
6 didn't you help me at any point? Which document were you  
7 unable to get to, to apply? How much have I sacrificed for  
8 rehabilitation? Did I have to take out a loan? I have a  
9 mortgage and I had to move out of my house because I cannot  
10 live in it. These are situations that we need to address.

11 So, I urge you to do that. I will also be available  
12 be available for questions at the end, but I wanted you to  
13 know that. The municipalities of Guánica, Yauco, Ponce,  
14 Guayanilla, Peñuelas, Lajas, and Mayagüez were areas  
15 identified by the Federal Department of Housing to  
16 participate in this program. And it was demanded that  
17 priority be given to financing the recovery from the  
18 disasters of 2019 and 2020.

19 Following what our colleague Olmeda said, this is very  
20 important because we know that we are arriving now in  
21 2022 and we will not be filling applications until 2023,  
22 but these were funds that were not available immediately.

23 These funds were approved by the U.S. Congress

1 and subsequently allocated to Puerto Rico. Okay.

2 After the presentation, a presentation and  
3 work session that we held in June 2021 between the  
4 municipalities of Yauco, Ponce, Guayanilla, and Guánica,  
5 the original action plan was approved on September 7, 2021.  
6 In other words, you are already seeing the result of what was  
7 approved. That plan established particular activities,  
8 which we are discussing how to amend, improve, and loosen  
9 today so we can try to reach more people.

8 By the end of 2021, several mayors of the region,  
9 including my friend Ismael Rodríguez, got together and  
10 we began to discuss how to address the situation of  
11 speeding up the reconstruction process of their  
12 municipalities. They are very conscious, the six mayors we  
13 mentioned, of the housing needs, the limitations that exist,  
14 and the issue that we are all familiar with.

15 They talk about millions of dollars, but the projects  
16 do not get where they need to go. These meetings resulted  
17 in the discussion of various ideas and processes, and we  
18 were relocated to Washington. First, we had several  
19 meetings here in Puerto Rico with the Resident  
20 Commissioner, Jennifer González, with officials of the  
21 Department of Housing, with the municipalities

1 in which we presented our intention to participate in the  
2 process.

3 After that, in December 2021, we went to  
4 Washington, we met there again with the Commissioner,  
5 we met with officials and representatives in the  
6 U.S. Congress, we met directly with HUD representatives,  
7 the Puerto Rico Office in Washington. We even went as far  
8 as the White House. We met with White House officials to  
9 talk about this issue and the concerns that the mayors had.

10 The idea of creating this consortium came from this  
11 whole process. There is a consortium of six municipalities  
12 from the south to find ways to become more efficient and  
13 speed up the reconstruction process. And you will ask,  
14 "why a consortium?" I think it was one of the... I think it  
15 was the pastor who commented on whether the municipalities  
16 or the consortium will do it.

17 We sat at the table and there is an issue right now in  
18 Puerto Rico; there is a lot of money, but there are few  
19 contractors, there are no materials, there is no workforce  
20 to carry out the projects. If we had six municipalities  
21 with an allocation of a hundred-odd million dollars to do  
22 the same thing, which was to address housing problems, what  
23 was going to happen? Each municipality would be holding  
24 its own auction.

1 Each municipality was going to be competing for the same  
2 resources and, in the long run, projects would be delayed  
3 because we are competing with each other.

4 The concept of the Consortium allows us,  
5 in coordination with PRDOH, to initiate some auction  
6 processes. We will bring in contractors, engineering  
7 professionals, and various other resources that will help  
8 us address your housing problems. Instead of Lajas  
9 initiating on one side and Guánica initiating on the other,  
10 everything will be coordinated through the municipal  
11 consortium.

12 The consortium's board of directors is composed of the  
13 mayors. The mayors participate in the decision-making  
14 processes and in establishing the procedures. It is up to  
15 me and a work team to execute the activities. For this to  
16 happen, we are the ones who are going to answer to the  
17 mayors, to the Department of Housing, and mainly to you in  
18 terms of direct contact.

19 This is the first time this consortium has been done  
20 for this type of project in Puerto Rico. I think that  
21 is very important. The federal government, the Department  
22 of Housing, and the Government of Puerto Rico are  
23 betting on this and they are trusting us. In other words,  
24 it is a very important responsibility. I believe that

1 it is, is very... Emphasis should be given to that part.

2 What we are doing is creating a, a new model  
3 of how to develop and address this need. Today I  
4 have to tell you that the consortium is a reality. We  
5 are already incorporated, we have already signed the  
6 agreement with the Department of Housing. During the past  
7 few months, we have been undergoing a series of training  
8 sessions so we can have the capacity to receive and manage  
9 the funds.

10 We have been interviewing the staff who will be  
11 working for us. We have been identifying offices we will be  
12 in. Physically, CONSUR will have an office in Ponce as the  
13 head of the district, but we will be in all six  
14 municipalities. Each municipality will have staff that will  
15 work with us and we will move in other municipalities on a  
16 regular basis to pick up applications, visit your  
17 properties, and follow up on documents if necessary, which  
18 is what is often most difficult for us, right, when it is  
19 time to process an application in a way that makes the  
20 process faster.

21 It is up to all of us, the central government, the  
22 state and federal governments, the municipalities, the non-  
23 governmental organizations. This is very important, the  
24 religious groups, the non-profit entities, clubs,  
25 associations, organizations; we are going to contact



1       them and we need your experience. You are the ones who know  
2       where many of these needs are; maybe people who have them  
3       never applied because they did not dare or did not know how  
4       to or how we would be able to reach them.

5               The private sector, academia, and other  
6       interested sectors and affected parties, professional  
7       groups, and the most important component, which is the  
8       communities; I would like to emphasize that there is going  
9       to be a lot of community participation in the process. We  
10      are going to meet and to talk so we can work on how to  
11      search.

12             Perhaps the answer we are going to give you will not  
13      always be the one you want to hear, because we have to be  
14      very clear on that. There is a regulation and it is very  
15      demanding on this program, but we are going to talk to them  
16      head-on and we are going to be able to explain and look for  
17      alternatives. And we must look for another option so we can  
18      do it.

19             Our comments this morning are directed towards clearly  
20      defining the ideas, concepts, and initiatives that we have  
21      been discussing with different sectors in the action plan.  
22      You have already touched on some of the points that we are  
23      going to talk about today. We will go a little further with  
24      in others, but at the same time, we want to integrate  
25      definitions and initiatives more broadly in the document  
26      with the intention of making the action plan

1 give us more flexibility to integrate future projects  
2 and developments that will emerge from the consultation  
3 and dialogue process with residents and all the groups we  
4 have spoken to up to this point. Okay.

5 The action plan proposed by the Department of  
6 Housing is pursuing the development of the Repair,  
7 Reconstruction, and Relocation Program. And you already  
8 know what those three concepts are. The difference between  
9 repair and reconstruction will, right, be related to the  
10 economic aspect of this initial evaluation. There will then  
11 be determinations in terms of whether the residence where  
12 you live or the one you intend to rehabilitate, I think  
13 there was a case like that around here, can you really  
14 rebuild on that site or what we must consider and think  
15 about another situation. I believe it was the woman from,  
16 from Yauco who was speaking this morning.

14 In accordance with federal regulation, all  
15 programs financed with CDBG-DR funds must demonstrate  
16 a benefit to individuals and communities by meeting one of  
17 the following three national objectives. And this is very  
18 important. It should benefit low and moderate-income  
19 persons. The situation the gentleman was talking about is  
20 addressed here, later we will talk a little more about  
21 that.

1           It should help to prevent slums or deteriorated  
2 areas. We know those exist in every one of those  
3 municipalities and communities. And it must meet a need of  
4 particular urgency. An urgent need, right. That one is the  
5 most, it is the one that gives them the most space to do  
6 things.

7           Our proposals are designed in compliance with  
8 these three national objectives, and our request to the  
9 Department of Housing is that we do not limit the  
10 activities that we can develop in the pursuit of these  
11 objectives. Despite these common elements, each  
12 municipality has its own particularities with regards to  
13 the housing needs of its residents.

14           Like the mayor mentioned, there is a real limitation  
15 of available housing or land suitable for development in  
16 the region as a whole, and that same situation was repeated  
17 in Guayanilla, and even in Lajas itself there is no  
18 sufficient housing, even if we, say, give out a voucher to  
19 find a house.

20           If you check the market, there is not enough housing  
21 for that, and even in some cases, building is complicated.  
22 Why? Because most land has some kind of limitation.  
23 Whether the area restrictions are agricultural areas, or  
24 located in flood zones, or were affected by earthquakes, or  
25 that we know they can be

1 affected in the future.

2 In other words, it is a big challenge, and we have to  
3 work closely together, because it is not so simple as  
4 saying, "Here, go find a house" and it is not as simple as  
5 saying "I am going to build five, six, seven hundred, seven  
6 hundred houses, which is what I need to meet the housing  
7 needs." We have to be creative in that process.

8 I want to talk about specific topics and, like I told  
9 you, these are technical aspects. I do not expect PRDOH to  
10 give us an answer today, but to initiate a dialogue to see  
11 what we can do to address these situations. On the subject  
12 of relocations, you propose to work in conjunction with the  
13 communities to reduce displacement and the social impact  
14 this causes.

15 We know that it is not the most appropriate thing to  
16 say "I am going to move the entire community from this  
17 site" when they often have to look for houses in different  
18 places and they have a relationship. There is a, there is  
19 an affinity with that neighbor, that friend, that relative  
20 who has been living there for years. We have to work on  
21 relocation issue, of how we are going to be able to  
22 maintain the, the social fiber, right, the structure of  
23 that community, which has perhaps been living for decades  
24 in that place.

25 If necessary, alternatives will be promoted to ensure  
26 that the displacement allows us to keep the

1 communities living together. They should demand it. But  
2 for that, we propose, and these are some of the activities  
3 that we want to develop, to make the purchase of land and/or  
4 properties viable for relocating families. Explore the  
5 possibility of subsidies for mortgage balance for those  
6 families that, due of the conditions of their property or  
7 community, cannot rehabilitate the house they currently have  
8 because it is not feasible for them.

9 An example of this is that the level of damage in  
10 Ponce was maybe not the same as yours here, but many  
11 buildings were affected. Those people who lived in these  
12 condominiums, many of them had to abandon those condominiums  
13 because they are not, they are not... they are not in  
14 suitable conditions. Because of claims issues to insurance  
15 companies that have nothing to do with housing or with the  
16 municipality, well, many of these people have had to move to  
17 another property. They are paying rent on a second property  
18 along with a mortgage on the building that they can no  
19 longer live in, but still have to pay for to have a future  
20 claim in that process.

21 We understand that we have to sit down with PRDOH.  
22 We have to see how we are going to be able to address that  
23 situation, because it's a little bit complicated, right,  
24 from the economic point of view that can comply with both  
25 obligations.

1           We have the rehabilitation topic in place, we will  
2           address the cases of people who have started... and the  
3           initial question, and it has been mentioned here, is how  
4           we will address to the cases of people who have already  
5           started partial rehabilitations of their residences. Carlos  
6           has explained it and we have to discuss how we are going to  
7           work on it in detail. Carlos, maybe the proposal or  
8           commentary on the way the plan is written gives the initial  
9           impression of ineligibility, that there can be no such  
10          duplicity.

11          It is partially so we can discuss it, so we are clear  
12          on the fact that we are not talking about duplicity. It is  
13          one thing to have received FEMA, insurance, or another  
14          state or federal aid, but like you have explained on  
15          various occasions this morning, through us you we will be  
16          able to go and finish the house.

17          What will happen if you already received aid, but it  
18          was not enough to finish the construction? We know that has  
19          happened. There are people who came with the thirty-five,  
20          thirty, twenty that FEMA gave them and they did what they  
21          could at that time. Then suddenly they say, "Well, I want  
22          to make the home I deserve," right, because they do not  
23          want to live in in an overcrowded home or have these  
24          conditions; we are going to discuss that.

25          How do we determine whether the state or federal aid

1 was enough to rebuild or rehabilitate your property?  
2 And again, these are technical aspects that are in the  
3 plan, but it talks about definitions, so let us see how we  
4 are going to address it. We also want to address to the  
5 purchase of real estate. In this case we are talking about  
6 land for possible development, to maintain the social  
7 integrity of the communities that we were just talking  
8 about. We want them to continue to live together, right?

9 If we can purchase land for housing development there  
10 so that I can then say "I am going to relocate this  
11 group of families living in this or that neighborhood or  
12 community because that is not a suitable area to live in",  
13 that is something we will be able to work with. We have  
14 hundreds of abandoned properties and public nuisances to be  
15 reconstructed and made available to the families that need  
16 to be relocated or are interested in being relocated in  
17 their communities.

18 In this since, well, we know that the municipalities  
19 are, in many cases, working with what they call public  
20 nuisances, right, properties that have been abandoned or  
21 that have been abandoned for decades. There is legislation  
22 for executing these properties. If we can work on buying  
23 those properties, rebuilding them or to getting them in  
24 good condition, right, for it to, for it to be an option  
25 people can relocate to.

1           I would also like to discuss, in due course, the, the  
2           concept of rent and more directed at... I saw that you,  
3           it was in the initial plan and then it was eliminated,  
4           I imagine, because of the complexities that this entails,  
5           but, but we have a reality. The mayor comes and knocks a  
6           certain person's house, Carlos, and where is Carlos going  
7           to live while the program builds his home? Well, we know  
8           that there are dozens of families that have not agreed to  
9           participate in the, the demolition program because they  
10          have nowhere else to go.

11          So, what can I do if it is rented or if it is another  
12          alternative for me to own a home? I can say, "Carlos, you  
13          are moving here while we build your house." We would to...  
14          to discuss it, right. I saw it in the initial plan, but  
15          then I saw that it is something that CONSUR would like to  
16          address.

17          For the voucher program, we propose to make the  
18          requirements more flexible to allow the purchase of  
19          properties that do not meet program standards, and that,  
20          within the budget allocation, it be possible to finance the  
21          rehabilitation of the construction to compliance with the  
22          program's codes, a home purchase and rehabilitation  
23          program. This is a concept similar to the Rehabilitation



1 and Repair Loan Program, the 203K that currently exists,  
2 which allows the financing of the purchase of a home and the  
3 cost of rehabilitating it through a single mortgage.

4 What is happening? You go the Department, you come  
5 to CONSUR in this case, CONSUR evaluates it, the  
6 engineering personnel comes, we determine that your  
7 property cannot be rehabilitated, right, that it is not an  
8 area that we should build on. You will be eligible, as I  
9 understand it, right, for, for a voucher to go to, to...  
10 OLMEDO, ESQ.:

11 (Speaks off-microphone).

12 Several options, the relocation.

13 JIRAU, ESQ.:

14 The relocation, well, you would have to go elsewhere.  
15 If you do not get a house, where will you move to? But  
16 then, on the other hand, there are houses in each of these  
17 towns that you drive by and say "Hey, that house looks  
18 nice," but we know that house... or you like the area, but  
19 that one home, after inspecting it, is never going to comply  
20 with the program requirements to be eligible for funding.

21 What we propose and want to discuss is that we can,  
22 with the allocation we are talking about, be it one hundred  
23 eighty-five or two hundred-odd thousand dollars, well,  
24 we will be able to buy the property. We will be able to buy

1 it at a lower price and the balance can be invested in  
2 getting that house to meet market conditions. Processes  
3 whatever way we can, given the limited land we have, well,  
4 we can prune those areas or those spaces, whether they be  
5 urban cases in the municipalities or in the communities,  
6 to rescue these spaces. So it is something that we propose  
7 that we can discuss.

8 Specifically, I would like to look at the document, and  
9 we are obviously going to put this in writing so that you  
10 can receive it, on page 24 it talks about, about risks and  
11 eighteen risks are mentioned. We know that this is a  
12 job that was done beforehand, right, and that it  
13 reflects, but we believe that we should include some  
14 additional risks in this evaluation. Once again, one  
15 of them is access, two is quality of construction, we  
16 talked about that a little today.

17 We are often going to have an impact on houses without  
18 knowing who built them, how they did it, when they did it,  
19 and with what materials. The topic of social displacement,  
20 the need for infrastructure and land types, we believe  
21 that we should add these five risks to the process of  
22 evaluation.

23 On page 62, on the subject of subrecipients, it  
24 states, "The subrecipients are selections by the recipient  
25 to carry out certain eligible program activities."

1 You have already mastered this. Basically, one of the  
2 items states, "Execute a specific program on behalf of  
3 Housing." CONSUR's suggestion to the Department is  
4 for it to read, "Execute the programs and activities  
5 developed in coordination with the Department of Housing."

6 I believe we have to talk as partners in the  
7 process, right. We will work to comply with the law,  
8 but, but CONSUR and the mayors are partners of the  
9 Department of Housing in this process.

10 On page 64, we also discussed the topic of the  
11 duplicity of benefits I mentioned earlier. My comment  
12 is that we need to define the concept of duplicity of  
13 benefits and how we address the needs of those families who  
14 have already received some type of assistance to cover part  
15 of the loss, private insurance, assistance, etc. What  
16 happens if, faced with lack of aid, the resident took out a  
17 loan or undertook the repair of their property? Well, how  
18 are we going to address these particular situations?

19 We have already talked about rent, we have already  
20 discussed it. The ineligible activities, this is a topic  
21 that I would like to discuss later, are the properties that  
22 are used as a second residence, which is on page 67, at the  
23 time of or after the disaster and are not eligible.

1 We are clear about that, if you own a house and you have a  
2 second home, typically you are not going to be able to  
3 address that because you already have a home. What was your  
4 actual place of residence? Like the colleague said, this is  
5 not for commercial purposes. The purpose is a residence.

6 The federal registry defines a second residence  
7 as a dwelling that is not the primary residence of an  
8 owner, tenant, or occupier at the time of the disaster or  
9 at the time of requesting assistance. We request to discuss  
10 and define the concept of second homes, because, what  
11 happens if we come across a person who, at the time of the  
12 disaster, had two residences? Your main residence was  
13 affected by the disaster and you had to relocate to the  
14 second house, to that second property, which at that time,  
15 was your second home.

16 The question is, could this citizen change the  
17 certification of principal residence in exchange for, I  
18 would say to authorize us to demolish the structure that  
19 they originally used as housing? I mean, in simple terms, I  
20 have two houses, obviously, one of them was affected by the  
21 earthquake. What is the first thing I do? Well, I call my  
22 tenant, or I call my nephew, or I call my daughter and I  
23 tell her, "I need you to move out because I need that  
24 home." That person is going to go live in that house which

1 technically was their second home, but right now  
2 it becomes their primary residence because the first one is  
3 not usable.

4 So, if we can work something that, "Okay. I can help,  
5 but we have to knock down the first house." Because, again,  
6 we are not looking for the person to benefit economically  
7 from this process. These are situations that we know exist  
8 in these towns. There are people who, as you have seen,  
9 many of them are people who are retired or have their  
10 pensions, which they have invested in, in a property, well,  
11 how can we guarantee that they can receive aid and that the  
12 mere fact that they had two houses, which is now actually  
13 one because the other was lost, will not disqualify them?

14 Page 68 talks about rehabilitation and reconstruction  
15 of houses located on the major banks of a body of water. We  
16 would like to work with the definition, because there could  
17 be areas that are classified incorrectly or we could change  
18 their classification by improving mitigation. I do not know  
19 if this is a topic that you have already addressed based on  
20 their experiences, but we know that many times there are  
21 areas that may appear to be classified as flooded, but have  
22 not flooded in the last hundred years because there have  
23 been improvements over the years.

24 Maybe what did not happen was that this, right, this

1 federal, right, and maybe the municipality or the central  
2 government did not take the steps to document the  
3 improvements that were made in those areas, and, therefore,  
4 it is considered a high-risk area. We know that the program  
5 provides for lifting, right, what we call around here,  
6 right, the cake, the levels of the residence to get it out  
7 of the flood area, but this is a topic that we would like  
8 to discuss.

9 We do not want to automatically think, "I am going to  
10 remove these families or this area from eligibility  
11 because, because it is in an area that may be restricted."  
12 On page 68 there is a part that talks about rehabilitation  
13 and reconstruction of a home, and it talks about the income  
14 levels that the gentleman mentioned, if it was located in a  
15 floodplain. But there is an element of eligibility that  
16 states that the owner did not maintain flood insurance on  
17 the affected property, even if he was not obligated to  
18 maintain such insurance.

19 I think it is something we need to discuss because  
20 hey, if I was not obligated to have it, then why are they  
21 going to deny my eligibility from the program. We know, for  
22 example, that FEMA often gives us one shot, right. "If you  
23 did not have insurance in the first event, I will give you  
24 the help, but from now on you have to take out insurance.  
25 If you do not take out insurance, you cannot qualify during  
26 a second

1 event."

2 This is something to be discussed because if we have a  
3 citizen who can really show us "Look, I did not have my  
4 insurance, but it was because I did not know how to or  
5 could not" or whatever else, but from that point on, he  
6 would have it. And now we all know that if we are given the  
7 help, looking towards the future, we have to buy insurance,  
8 otherwise, we cannot return to FEMA or Housing for  
9 assistance. This is something that we would like to  
10 discuss.

11 So, we have a comment to the Department that  
12 is related to, to... these are the Consortium documents  
13 that we already signed. Exhibit A, so to speak, of the  
14 activities to be carried out. We want to clarify the  
15 part... whether the demolition services are really  
16 integrated or if you will have to integrate them, including  
17 permits, monitoring, everything.

18 We know that the municipalities are working with a  
19 PPDR program, but we know that this program is very  
20 complicated, to say the least, and that many residents will  
21 not be eligible for this program. We can evaluate later how  
22 far we can go with demolitions and everything else. I know  
23 it is part of the eligible expenditures, right, but to, to  
24 be clear on that part.

1 Then, there is a part that talks about construction  
2 works and design and construction. We understand that we  
3 have to find a way to make that a little more flexible  
4 because companies that do the design and construction,  
5 sometimes it is quite complicated. If we want to open up  
6 the range of possibilities, maybe we should work with the  
7 possibility of companies that can do both, but do not  
8 disqualify other companies or firms that can make the  
9 design.

10 In Carlos' case, the case we were talking about  
11 earlier, well, I do the study, I do the design, and  
12 another company we already have, right, that is  
13 prequalified, be the one that does the construction. We  
14 want to be able to discuss this issue.

15 In conclusion, these are our comments at this  
16 stage. Obviously, we are going to be evaluating and, and  
17 Puerto Rico has been affected by these unexpected disasters.  
18 As Puerto Rico's needs increase with every disaster, the  
19 need to maintain a coordinated approach between all of us  
20 becomes more important every day. And obviously, effective  
21 implementation is what is going to enable us to work with  
22 rehabilitation.

23 So, those are basically our comments. The idea is that  
24 we can sit down and maybe discuss it and look for more  
25 details about this. I do not want to leave without  
26 concluding that, please, once again, what



1 I told you at the beginning. As you can see, and perhaps  
2 some of these things will make you say, "But what are they  
3 talking?", right, but I want you to feel confident enough  
4 to speak up about your situations.

5 What you are proposing, mayor, regarding needs, it is  
6 up to me and our team to turn it into a process in which we  
7 can speak with Housing and the federal government, which is  
8 well-represented here, to see the way in which these funds  
9 can be used efficiently. So, feel free to talk to us.

10 Dates. As Mr. Olmedo and his colleagues said, we are  
11 in the process of recruiting, we are complying with training  
12 and certifications that are legally required, as it should  
13 be, and for the month of February, we are going to start  
14 visiting the, the six municipalities. This will be  
15 coordinated, they will be notified in advance.

16 We will hold community meetings to talk about this  
17 in detail, right, what we are talking about today, but  
18 I would also like to receive your comments. At that  
19 moment, we are going to start talking about application  
20 processes, documents and information that you should  
21 receive. On those dates, you will be provided information  
22 about the telephone numbers, emails, contact

1 areas.

2 Like I mentioned, although there is going to be a  
3 physical office in Ponce, we will be moving, and the  
4 CONSUR staff will be at the... at the six municipalities.  
5 There will be people at the municipalities that will help  
6 you submit the documents or clarify information. From  
7 February onwards, we will be in the process that we call  
8 outreach. The purpose is to carry this information.

9 At the same time, CONSUR will be working with the  
10 Department of Housing for auction processes and the hiring  
11 of the staff who will be carrying out the professional  
12 services that they have talked about, such as engineering,  
13 property evaluations, soil studies, project management, and  
14 the construction companies that are going to be working for  
15 CONSUR to carry out the housing projects. You ask for  
16 dates, I would say that we should be working with specific  
17 cases by the middle of next year.

18 We are going to be very careful with that. We do not  
19 want to raise expectations that we cannot meet. Again,  
20 you will always receive the truth from us and we will  
21 speak plainly. You may not like it at the moment, right,  
22 but maybe you are going to, to appreciate that more than

1 us saying, "Ah, well, look, I will be doing your house in  
2 January." No, this is a very delicate, meticulous program,  
3 it entails many processes, but I want you to know that it is  
4 running with a lot of moving parts at the same time.

5 The PRDOH team has been super cooperative. The  
6 federal government has been super cooperative and they are  
7 very attentive to this process, we all have great  
8 challenges ahead. So, thank you very much and those are my  
9 comments.

10 MODERATOR:

11 Many thanks to Mr. Carlos Jirau, executive director  
12 of CONSUR. We are very pleased that you are here this  
13 morning sharing with us because, exactly like you said, we  
14 are a work team. You will be that, that face and that point  
15 of contact for the citizens of the different municipalities  
to bring the information to the... to the mayors, to  
16 CONSUR, and to the Department of Housing. So, it is a good  
17 thing you assigned the work this morning.

18 We also thank everyone for being here in the morning.  
19 Like the attorney says, it is a process that is very  
20 meticulous and they will be evaluating on a case-by-case  
21 basis, but do not rule yourself out either. Everyone, go  
22 submit your application and have your particular case  
23 evaluated. OK? We therefore conclude this process by  
24 inviting final comments if anyone

1 is interested. Yes.

2 JIRAU, ESQ.:

3 You can hear me, right? I can yell. Echoing  
4 what you are saying, apply and convince your friends,  
5 neighbors, relatives to apply. There is nobody from out  
6 there that will say, "No, you are not going to qualify,"  
7 "Ah, you are not eligible." Do not let anyone decide that.  
8 Let us evaluate. Each case is different. You can look at  
9 two neighbor's cases and they would appear to be the same,  
10 but each case is different because of the income, there is  
11 different information, other documents. In other words,  
12 tell everyone to please apply. It is important and the  
13 program will tell you whether you do or do not meet the  
14 requirements.

15 MODERATOR:

16 Ma'am, it is very important that you are share  
17 your name and of the town you are from.

18 MRS. WANDA RODRÍGUEZ:

19 Wanda Rodríguez from right here, Ensenada, Guánica. I  
20 live in San Juan with my sister since the first earthquakes  
21 of the 28th because I completely lost my house on that  
22 first day.

23 MODERATOR:

24 Wow.

1 MRS. WANDA RODRÍGUEZ:

2 My question is, at the time of application, when the  
3 applications start, do we have to go... are they going to  
4 be in the Municipality of Guánica or do we have to go to  
5 the main offices in Ponce?

6 MODERATOR:

7 Right here.

8 MRS. WANDA RODRÍGUEZ:

9 Okay.

10 JIRAU, ESQ.:

11 We are going to move on to the towns to facilitate the  
12 process.

13 MRS. WANDA RODRÍGUEZ:

14 Okay.

15 MODERATOR:

16 Yes, CONSUR has...

17 MRS. WANDA RODRÍGUEZ:

18 And in what way...?

19 MODERATOR:

20 Yes, sorry.

21 MRS. WANDA RODRÍGUEZ:

22 Sorry. How can I find out how I can find out how  
23 they are going to do it or let people know? I will be in  
24 San Juan and I learned about this from my neighbor at home  
25 who called me because I did not know about this, that is  
26 why I am here.

1 MODERATOR:

2 That is one way to find out. However, I am being told  
3 from the table here that it will be advertised in  
4 newspapers, the same way this public hearing was convened,  
5 through radio, community leaders, right, we are going to  
6 be...

7 MRS. WANDA RODRÍGUEZ:

8 Thank you.

9 MODERATOR:

10 ...we are going to use sound buses, which we call  
11 "tumbacocos", right, mayor?

12 MR. MAYOR:

13 That is correct.

14 MODERATOR:

15 ...Announcing where the application process will be  
16 so you can be there. Also, if you filled out the  
17 information sheet, Wanda, at the registration desk, we are  
18 also going to be notifying everyone that registered  
19 there. OK? And to your first question, Wanda, yes, there  
20 will be a CONSUR team here in the municipality of Guánica  
21 filling out those applications. You do not have to  
22 necessarily relocate to Ponce.

23 MRS. WANDA RODRÍGUEZ:

24 I have a recommendation for all the information that  
25 the director gave us. For next time, the Guánica offices  
26 should have that information so that those of us who

1 participated can have it and read it so we can evaluate it  
2 better, because it is not light, but if we can have it in  
3 our hands, we can study it better and understand it better.  
4 If it can be done.

5 MODERATOR:

6 Of course, of course it can be done. It has  
7 to be done because that is the recommendation you are  
giving us. Remember that we are still collecting all those  
8 comments up to December 31 of this year so you can make  
9 your comment. Remember that you can also submit your comment  
10 online on the website, right, on the Internet, but we also  
11 have the form here so that you can submit it in writing and  
12 send it like that as well.

13 Alright then, if there are no more comments or  
14 presentations, we conclude this public hearing process of  
15 the First Substantial Amendment to the Action Plan for the  
16 2019-2020 Earthquakes Response under CDBG-DR Funds from  
17 CDBG-DR Funds of the Puerto Rico Department of Housing. We  
18 thank you all for your presence, and the speakers for their  
19 valuable comments and suggestions.

20 We remind you that comments will be accepted through  
21 our email at [infoCDBG@vivienda.pr.gov](mailto:infoCDBG@vivienda.pr.gov) We are here at the  
22 registration table today, you can take your documentation

1 with you and send it to us by postal mail. You have until  
2 December 31 and today, today, December 14, we will be at  
3 the Centro Cultural de Lajas at 4 in the afternoon  
4 celebrating our fifth public hearing of this First  
5 Substantial Amendment to the Action Plan. Thank you all.

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\* \* \*

THE PUBLIC HEARING WAS ADJOURNED

\* \* \*

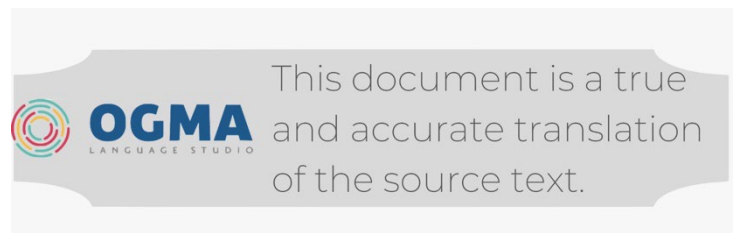
STENOGRAPHER'S CERTIFICATE

I HEREBY CERTIFY that the preceding is a faithful and correct transcription of the record taken by the undersigned of the proceedings held during this hearing.

In San Juan, Puerto Rico, on January 4, 2023.

DANIEL FIGUEROA SANABRIA

STENOGRAPHER





DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING  
CDBG-DR PROGRAM  
SAN JUAN, PUERTO RICO

RE:

FIRST ACTION PLAN AMENDMENT  
(SUBSTANTIAL) FOR THE 2019-  
2020 EARTHQUAKES AND 2020  
TROPICAL STORM ISAIÁS  
RESPONSE UNDER CDBG-DR FUNDS

PUBLIC HEARING

DATE : December 14, 2022  
TIME : 4:00 p.m.  
CLIENT : DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING CDBG-PR PROGRAM  
ADDRESS : 606 Barbosa Avenue, 8th Floor  
SAN JUAN, PUERTO RICO  
HELD IN : Centro Cultural Anastasio Ruiz Irizarry  
Lajas, Puerto Rico

ATTENDEES

MODERATOR:

Mrs. Maricarmen Figueroa Correa

PRESIDING TABLE:

Ms. Elaine Henríquez	-	Representative of Senator Ramón Ruiz
Ms. Yadira Mercado Ortiz	-	Representative of Mayor
Carlos Olmedo Álvarez, Esq.	-	Planner and Assistant Secretary for Planning

1 STENOGRAPHER OF RECORD:

2 Mr. Daniel Figueroa Sanabria

3 SIGN LANGUAGE INTERPRETERS:

4 Ms. Miriam Martínez

5 Ms. Iraida Barreto

6 \* \* \*

7 The proceedings were carried out according to the  
8 following transcription.

9 - 0 -

10 MODERATOR:

11 Good afternoon to all of you. We are  
12 happy and thrilled to be here in the Municipality of  
13 Lajas, holding this public hearing, our fifth Public  
14 Hearing on the First Action Plan Amendment (Substantial)  
15 for the 2019-2020 Earthquakes and 2020 Tropical Storm Isaias  
16 Response. We thank you for receiving us here in Lajas and  
17 we are going to begin at four o'clock in the afternoon this  
18 public hearing.

19 I want to formally wish a very good afternoon to all of  
20 you, and welcome to this Public Hearing on the Substantial  
21 Amendment of the Action Plan for the 2019-2020 Earthquakes  
22 and 2020 Tropical Storm Isaiás Response of the CDBG-DR Funds  
23 of the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development of  
24 Puerto Rico, which serves the needs of affected residents

1 in the municipalities of Guánica, Guayanilla, Lajas,  
2 Mayagüez, Peñuelas, Ponce, and Yauco.

3 My name is Maricarmen Figueroa, and I am the Assistant  
4 Federal Compliance and Sub-recipient Management Division, and  
5 today, December 14, 2022, at four o'clock in the afternoon,  
6 I will serve as your moderator from this place, the Centro  
7 Cultural de Lajas Anastasio Ruiz Irizarry. We are pleased to  
8 inform you that we have the assistance of an English and a  
9 sign language interpreter for the benefit of the communities  
10 that need them.

11 Let me now introduce some special guests.  
12 This afternoon, we count in attendance Ms. Marivette Cabeza  
13 Díaz, who is Associate Secretary for Recovery in Disasters,  
14 Division of Public and Community Affairs. We are also joined  
15 by Planner Carlos Olmedo Álvarez, Assistant Secretary for  
16 Planning Programs. On behalf of the Mayor, the Honorable  
17 Jayson "Jay" Martinez Maldonado, is Ms. Yadira Mercado  
18 Ortiz, and on behalf of Senator Ramón Ruiz, is Ms.  
19 Elaine Henríquez.

20 On behalf of the Secretary of the Department of  
21 Housing, William Rodriguez Rodriguez, and the Undersecretary  
22 of Recovery in Disasters, Marezkie Díaz Sánchez, we thank  
23 you for attending this important process for the recovery

1 of the south of the island after the earthquakes.

2 Well. Now, I'm going to share with you what has been  
3 the preparation for the public hearing. The Department of  
4 Housing convened for today, Wednesday, December 14,  
5 2022, this public hearing with the purpose of hearing  
6 comments and/or suggestions from the affected residents  
7 in the municipalities of Guánica, Guayanilla, Lajas,  
8 Mayagüez, Peñuelas, Ponce, and Yauco, as well as the general  
9 public.

10 This hearing is part of the federal requirement of the  
11 citizen participation process to receive comments  
12 on this first amendment to this action plan. This  
13 includes unsatisfied needs after the passage of the  
14 Tropical Storm Isaiás, a new needs assessment  
15 for the use of the mitigation fund reserves and  
16 data on public outreach and participatory efforts  
17 of entities with an interest following the publication of  
18 the original action plan.

19 We remind you that the original plan of action is still  
20 available for review by the general public on our  
21 website [www.cdbg-dr.pr.gov](http://www.cdbg-dr.pr.gov). On the 18th and 29th of  
22 November 2022, notices of hearings were published in the  
23 on the El Nuevo Día newspaper, pages 45 and 29,  
24 respectively, as required by the regulations.

25 I must also tell you that this hearing is being recorded

1 and will later be available on our CDBG-DR Puerto Rico  
2 YouTube channel. The period of acceptance of public comments  
3 for this amendment has been available since November 4 of  
4 this year and will be extended until December 31, 2022. You  
5 can visit our website [cdbg-dr.pr.gov](http://cdbg-dr.pr.gov) to read the first  
6 amendment and submit your comments through the online form  
7 or via e-mail at [infocdbg@vivienda.pr.gov](mailto:infocdbg@vivienda.pr.gov).

8 You can also send your comments via regular mail at  
9 to P.O. Box 21365, San Juan, Puerto Rico 00928-1365. In  
10 addition, you can submit your comments in writing today.  
11 This afternoon we have available at our registration desk a  
12 form that will allow you to submit your comments in writing  
13 and leave them today for the program to consider.

14 Let's talk now about the rules for the public  
15 hearing. To guarantee the processes this afternoon,  
16 we would like to establish the following rules for a healthy  
17 collection of comments to this action plan. You should  
18 have registered at the entrance to depose and/or  
19 express your interest during the hearing.

20 Turns will be given in order of arrival. Each speaker  
21 will be given a five-minute turn.

1 This turn is not transferable to another deponent. Before  
2 deposing, you must identify yourself for registration  
3 purposes with your name and town of origin or the entity to  
4 which you belong. The position must be on topics related to  
5 the First Substantial Amendment to the Action Plan for the  
6 2019-2020 Earthquakes and the 2020 Tropical Storm Isaiás  
7 2020 Response of CDBG-DR funds.

8 Each speaker must respect the turn of the others  
9 and maintain silence during the public hearing. The  
10 moderator will tell you when it will be your turn. All  
11 persons participating in this public hearing shall promote an  
12 environment of respect and we are sure that this will be the  
13 case.

14 Well. Well, after that introduction, the context in  
15 which we are holding this public hearing and after going  
16 over the rules so that the public hearing is successful, I  
17 will then introduce to you the Planner, Mr. Carlos Olmedo, to  
18 expound on this First Substantial Amendment to the Action  
19 Plan in Response to Earthquakes and Tropical Storm Isaiás.  
20 Carlos, all yours.

21 OLMEDO, ESQ.:

22 Good afternoon. As Maricarmen has already explained, I  
23 am going to give a presentation on what the action plan is,  
24 the funds, and the program that we are... the changes to the

1 program that we're going to be... that we are presenting as  
2 part of the action plan. Okay.

3 The funds arrive... These are special funds. These are  
4 CDBG-DR funds, which are funds similar to the ones that we  
5 have from María, but these funds in particular are  
6 exclusively for home repair use after the earthquakes. So,  
7 the seismic events that began... I will go slower. Sorry.  
8 The seismic movements that started in 2019 and have  
9 continued, because of those funds... because of these  
10 events, the first funds were granted, which were explained,  
11 presented, and approved as part of the action plan adopted  
12 last year.

13 Those funds arrive, right, after the events that  
14 occurred between Christmas 2019 and the year 2020. Already  
15 by January 2021, these funds are filed with the CFR, which is  
16 a federal document produced by HUD. Thirty-six million  
17 dollars, 36.4 million dollars were presented.

18 You will say, "Wow, that was a year later." Yes, the  
19 CDBG-DR or CDBG-MIT funds are not emergency funds.  
20 When an event occurs, the emergency responders are  
21 FEMA, there is the State Emergency Management Agency,  
22 there are funds that come from SBA, there are funds that  
23 come from 'Rural.'

24 There are other funds that are involved in the

1 processes of dealing with the emergency and managing  
2 disasters in the months that follow the disasters, and the  
3 rest, the CDBG funds, and in this case DR, which is what we  
4 are going to be discussing, MIT, which is of mitigation,  
5 same thing happens, these are not funds to address the  
6 emergency. These are funds that after the events happen, a  
7 calculation is made, an assessment between what damages were  
8 reported, all the damages incurred, how much money was  
9 awarded, and that difference between the money that was  
10 needed versus the money that was granted, as the difference  
11 is calculated on the basis of this money, the money from  
12 these funds.

13           These are funds to cover needs not covered by  
14 emergency funds. This is the design. Therefore, they are not  
15 immediately available when the event occurs. They are  
16 available one to two years after the event.

17           That's why they come forward after FEMA delivers their  
18 reports to the federal government and grants part of the  
19 money, the funds are presented, we receive on  
20 January 6, the notice that the funds... on January 6,  
21 2021 the notice that the funds are for Puerto Rico and  
22 the work begins on what was the action plan  
23 to address... to use this money.

24           The approval process for an action plan is  
25 long, right. The program is designed, we talk to the various



1 parties and so on. The action plan was approved on January  
2 5, 2022. This is the action plan that we now have for  
3 thirty-six million dollars.

4 What happens? Life moved on. The reports showed  
5 greater or additional damage than the original reports  
6 stated. So, additional money is going to be granted,  
7 which is the money that we are going to present or that  
8 we are presenting now. And later on, I'll talk about that.

9 With these original thirty-six million from this  
10 plan, from the plan that was approved last year, a new plan  
11 is created to address home repairs. The federal document  
12 said that eighty-one percent of those thirty-six million was  
13 to be used in four municipalities that are here, Ponce,  
14 Guánica, Yauco, and Guayanilla.

15 Calculations were made on the basis of the damage.  
16 Money was distributed to each of the municipalities.  
17 However, shortly thereafter, a couple of months later, a  
18 month, later, another 'federal register' was received, which  
19 grants more money for Puerto Rico to address this situation.  
20 And an additional one hundred and eighty-four million were  
21 granted. So, we had thirty-six plus one hundred and eighty-  
22 four million, because that makes a big difference as to what  
23 can be done with that money.

1           In essence, all of this money, or the vast majority of  
2 this money is to address a situation similar to that of the  
3 previous funds, which are for households affected by the  
4 earthquakes. There is a very small item that I am going to  
5 present now, which is the for the case of Mayagüez, where  
6 heavy rains, flooding caused by the rainfall from Tropical  
7 Storm Isaiás.

8           These funds are received, notice is received of the  
9 funds, work begins on the action plan, which is what we are  
10 presenting to you today, it is decided that some changes  
11 must be made to the original proposal. I will discuss these  
12 changes with you.

13           These changes include, then... there's now more money  
14 and included are the municipalities of Lajas and Peñuelas,  
15 as part of the municipalities that are going to receive  
16 funds for home repairs resulting from the earthquakes and  
17 the money set aside for Mayagüez, which is about seven  
18 million dollars. That we can now talk a little more.

19           Here I am in this presentation, as Mayagüez is another  
20 matter, which is because of flooding, I'm not going to... I  
21 am going to explain what is being done, but I'm not going to  
22 go into much detail on how the work will be done in Mayagüez  
23 because we are rather focusing more on the earthquake  
24 aspect. If someone wants to discuss Mayagüez, well, I can do  
25 it, but it is...

1           So, we have thirty-six million from the first  
2 plan that have already been approved, the one hundred and  
3 eighty-four of this... of this 'federal register' which is  
4 what we're saying, how we are going to use in this plan and  
5 the total are two hundred and twenty-one million. We take  
6 away the seven of Mayagüez and we have about two hundred and  
7 fourteen million left. Okay.

8           One of the changes made to the original action plan  
9 and the one we are presenting today, which is the first  
10 amendment, is that the mayors had raised a concern  
11 regarding... First, they had requested the inclusion of  
12 Lajas and Peñuelas and they could be included, but  
13 that entailed that we had to take money away from the  
14 municipalities that we had already granted money to  
15 in order to give money to Lajas and Peñuelas. And they  
16 presented their intention to have a greater participation in  
17 the process.

18           To date, the Department of Housing, the  
19 CDBG-DR funds had never been granted in Puerto Rico, funds  
20 directly to the municipalities or no funds had been allocated  
21 for the municipalities to work directly with the aggrieved  
22 families. Municipalities do receive money to work on public  
23 infrastructure, roads, bridges, sidewalks, and other public  
24 buildings, but not to intervene with people directly. On

1 this occasion, they will be allowed to do so. This is one  
2 of the changes we are including.

3 For this purpose, money was to be given to the six  
4 municipalities, but these six municipalities were to compete  
5 with each other because they were going to be, right, in the  
6 auction processes to inspectors, designers, people to obtain  
7 permits and other stuff, supplies, and so on. So, it was  
8 decided that this would be a joint effort.

9 The six mayors banded together and created a structure  
10 which is called CONSUR, short for Consorcio del Sur. This  
11 consortium, this new legal creature that will administer  
12 these funds, will manage the program tasked with the repair,  
13 reconstruction, and rehabilitation of homes. What this means  
14 is that it will have a presence. It will not be from San  
15 Juan Housing, right, or something that the Housing offices  
16 will work on, but there will be a CONSUR office here.

17 I understand that the main office will be in Ponce  
18 and each municipality will have a representative, one or two  
19 representatives in the mayor's offices that will be working  
20 with directly with the population. They will receive  
21 information from you, you will be able to visit them and  
22 they'll give you the information. They will manage what is  
23 the program itself.

1           We are going to talk about it right now because  
2           an R was added. In the original, the original plan had  
3           had... Two Rs were presented in the original action plan,  
4           which was reconstruction and... repair and reconstruction.  
5           The mayors had requested that they be allowed to relocate,  
6           as they understood that there were individual or groups of  
7           properties, communities that required relocation from the  
8           area where they were because, right, the land where they  
9           were located was not safe.

10           Originally, this was being contemplated under another  
11           CDBG program, which is the CDBG MIT mitigation program.  
12           However, now that there's more money, right, as you will  
13           understand, relocation is a bit more costly, and thus,  
14           well, the program is indeed being allowed, it is being  
15           allowed, the third R, which is for relocation, is being  
16           included to the program. So, the program to be managed by the  
17           municipalities, the consortium of municipalities, CONSUR, is  
18           going to include what is repair, reconstruction, and what is  
19           relocation.

20           This is the money, right, the money exchanges that  
21           we are making, right, the adjustments that we are making  
22           right now. This is the first allotment with modifications  
23           that we are presenting. This is the second allotment on this  
24           action plan, essentially. What is important is this total.

25           What is important is that we are going to discuss

1 this total.

2 So, for Guanica, for Guanica we have 43.1 million  
3 dollars, for Guayanilla 20.9 million, for Lajas 14.7,  
4 Peñuelas 15.4, Ponce 36.0, Yauco 34.5. Okay. This is the  
5 money that each municipality will have to attend to its  
6 territory. This does not add up to. the two hundred twenty-  
7 one million dollars. To which I have to add what is here  
8 and that I am going to explain it later on.

9 This money, this distribution is made using the  
10 information provided to us by FEMA on the amount of  
11 households that were affected and the estimated cost to  
12 repair each home. So that's why they see that distribution  
13 and it varies. The percentage that was awarded or which is  
14 reported here by FEMA is the percentage of money that is  
15 being received here.

16 Nine million dollars are being allocated for CONSUR.  
17 That's \$9 million to pay for the office rent, pay for  
18 employees who are going to recruit, purchase equipment,  
19 supplies, computers, and other stuff. The 7.3 million I  
20 mentioned to you that are going to be for Mayagüez, that  
21 this is what the Municipality of Mayagüez is going to use for  
22 home repairs due to the floods.

23 Twenty-eight point eight million that will be used for  
24 the, for projects or... for mitigation projects,

1 whether it is community-level mitigation or mitigation in  
2 households, as this money is to be used in the  
3 municipalities. And the eleven million which is the  
4 administrative, for the housing administration, which is  
5 basically the money to manage the program, these types of  
6 activities, which will be the platforms for the application  
7 of funds, the salaries of the people working with us and  
8 others. That then gives us the twenty-one million dollars,  
9 the two hundred twenty-one million dollars that we have  
10 here.

11 The Repair, Reconstruction, and Relocation Program  
12 (RRRP) I had mentioned to you, well, this is a summary of  
13 what the program is. Further on, some other time, we'll go  
14 back to this, which I'm going to explain later, the entire  
15 Housing team to give them more details, but what's important  
16 here is for homeowners only. True, you can't use the money  
17 for businesses. We will only address homes, residences, not  
18 businesses.

19 The work will be done through CONSUR. We have already  
20 signed a contract with this organization created by the  
21 municipalities, that is run by the six municipalities, but  
22 it is an organization that is going to be hiring and so on,  
23 which is who will receive the money to manage the funds.  
24 And we have the maximum allocation for the different  
25 activities. Whether it is a rehabilitation, which is a

1 repair of a household, sixty thousand dollars is the maximum  
2 allowance.

3 If it is a reconstruction including demolition  
4 --which is that there is a part of the home that needs to be  
5 torn down, broken down, the debris removed, and rebuilt--  
6 then, that adds up to one hundred and eighty-five thousand  
7 dollars. If it involves reconstruction plus elevation  
8 including the processes of demolition, it is two hundred and  
9 sixty-five thousand dollars.

10 These are the caps.

11 How does this vary? It depends on inspections.  
12 You apply and a licensed engineer or architect  
13 will be sent to do the evaluation of your home and it  
14 depends on the evaluation that he makes and tells us what  
15 the damages are and does a report of what the damages are...  
16 this is how would each person qualify.

17 One issue that came up quite a bit, that people  
18 asked quite a few questions this morning, during the  
19 presentation this morning, is what happens if I received FEMA  
20 funds and I started to repair my house and I could have  
21 finished that repair, but I have some more left or I'm half-  
22 way through that repair. It doesn't matter, apply, because,  
23 remember that these funds are to cover unmet needs.

24 You may have received funds from FEMA or SBA or from your  
25 insurance, an SBA loan, or from your insurance and qualify  
26 for these funds. So, do not stop participating, do not stop  
27 applying, request those funds.



1           If you have, your property has any issue with  
2 ownership, the property being that of an inheritance, it is  
3 an inheritance or is it from... you didn't buy it, right,  
4 the way you often buy in rural areas, that is simply  
5 the sale contract and never went to register it anywhere and  
6 what you have is the private contract or whatever, apply.  
7 Do not miss the opportunity to participate because we have,  
8 not here, but as part of the CDBG-DR funds, we have a  
9 program that is helpful with the ownership. They help you  
10 work on and obtain your property title.

11           If you participate in this program, you have  
12 direct participation in the property title program. You can  
13 have direct participation on an independent basis, but as a  
14 part of this program, a revaluation will be conducted. So,  
15 please participate. Do not stop participating for this  
16 matter.

17           This is the Housing website. You can search on  
18 Google: Housing Department or you can go to  
19 [www.vivienda.pr.gov](http://www.vivienda.pr.gov) and at the top right-hand side there is a  
20 'tab' that says "CDBG 2017." Click there and it takes you  
21 to our page, on which this logo will appear, this part will  
22 vary depending on the program. You'll see different photos.  
23 When you get to it, you click on it and it will lead you  
24 here. If not, you go here at the top, where it says... top  
25 left which says "Action Plan," and you click and

1 look for earthquake and it will lead you here.

2 Here you have two options. You can see the action plan,  
3 download the action plan document and read it. This  
4 you can do on your computer or cell phone and here you can  
5 submit comments. If you do not want to submit comments  
6 here and it occurs to you... that later, at home, you want  
7 to make them, go to the page, click, and submit your  
8 comments. You can also tell a friend or neighbor to  
9 participate.

10 This is our last public hearing. This is the  
11 fifth. We have made five. These were the ones we have  
12 conducted, the three that we've done on previous dates. This  
13 morning we were in Guanica, and now we are here in Lajas. If  
14 you have a neighbor, a friend, or someone else that you  
15 think might be interested, please go to our website and  
16 there you can find out more information.

17 Anyway, we are coordinating a... Now, on  
18 Christmas, it's a bit... a difficult time of the year, but  
19 we are already coordinating for February to visit again  
20 each of the municipalities with the CONSUR team, with the  
21 mayors' teams, to start to make small information fairs to  
22 provide more information, details of the programs, the

1 documents that you'll need to apply, the requirements and  
2 all that.

3 This will be notified. It will be announced on our  
4 website, on the Department of Housing's Facebook platform.  
5 and that of each municipality, by loudspeaker, and is going  
6 to be in the newspaper. There will be ways. However, if  
7 you registered there, the notice will also reach the people  
8 who are there. Okay. Stay tuned.

9 We will visit the municipalities on more than one  
10 occasion and we are going to talk about how the process of  
11 application will take place. We already have information,  
12 well, I don't have it personally, but the municipalities  
13 informed us about information that they have on many of you.  
14 I imagine that everyone, or I hope everyone, who experienced  
15 damage, because the municipalities have already collected  
16 them. We will also contact these people.

17 However, if you've never participated in these events  
18 of the municipality, you can participate in our program.  
19 There is no problem. When you come, we will have the  
20 staff to assist you in filling out the application through  
21 CONSUR and there will be no problem with that.

22 The application process will not take a day. So,  
23 don't worry if one day we say we are going to be here  
24 in the Municipality of Lajas and you cannot get there,  
25 because you can visit the one in Ponce, the one in  
26 Guayanilla,

1 the one in Guánica, and the application process will be  
2 open. They can be open for thirty, sixty days, ninety days.  
3 So, you'll have time to do it.

4 The same as if you go in and fill out the application  
5 and you miss a document, you may return because the  
6 application will remain open. There will be no problem.

7 CONSUR will have people to attend to each one of you  
8 in the municipalities, and if not, then there will be a  
9 way to contact us, the Department of Housing. So, you  
10 won't miss your chance to apply. What is important is for  
11 everyone who suffered damages to please apply.

12 Finally, this is the email if you want to contact the  
13 Housing team, which is [terremotos@vivienda.pr.gov](mailto:terremotos@vivienda.pr.gov) and the  
14 website of the program is [www.cdbg-dr.pr.gov](http://www.cdbg-dr.pr.gov). And now,  
15 we can go... anyone who wants to comment and so on, is  
16 welcome.

17 MODERATOR:

18 Thank you, Carlos Olmedo, to Planner Carlos Olmedo,  
19 who is spearheading these efforts under CDBG-DR. Thank you  
20 very much for this explanation. Certainly, it helps us  
21 continue to understand the purpose of the of this public  
22 hearing. We are here today because we want to inform you  
23 that the process of recovery after the earthquakes and

1 Tropical Storm Isaiás has begun.

2 The federal government is now 'on board' as we say,  
3 right. It is also beginning these processes along with us  
4 and announcing that by February, we will continue having  
5 these ongoing orientations with communities to ensure that  
6 the applications... that everyone can fill out their  
7 application. Fill out your application. If you had a, a  
8 mishap, right, or a small damage, medium size, or larger to  
9 your property, please apply.

10 If you already fully solved your situation, if you've  
11 solved it a little, or there's still stuff to be solved,  
12 please, apply. Do not say "No" to yourself, right, nor allow  
13 a neighbor with all the good intentions --because suddenly,  
14 we're all construction experts-- tell you "Bro, don't apply"  
15 or "Bro, don't apply, they won't give you anything." No.

16 We are going to request and let the experts be the ones to  
17 evaluate that property and determine your eligibility in the  
18 program. All right.

19 Very good. So, today, we're announcing all of this.  
20 In addition, we'd like to collect any thoughts you may have  
21 on this first amendment. You know that we'll be open until  
22 December 31 to receive these comments. It can be by regular  
23 mail, it can be online. Today we have the form on our  
24 registration desk for you to fill out and leave it.

1           So, there is no excuse for not sharing what has  
2           been our experience, to make suggestions, to bring, right,  
3           recommendations to the program that strengthen all of these  
4           recovery processes, right, because you are the ones who  
5           know best what those priorities and unmet needs  
6           are. Well. Now let's move on to... Before moving on to the  
7           speakers, I'd like to emphasize participating, right,  
8           submitting your application.

9           When the process is opened, we will be in all of the  
10          municipalities. You can jump from municipality to  
11          municipality. You don't have to wait, necessarily, right,  
12          until we are in Lajas, but you can also participate in other  
13          orientations in other municipalities. Today in the morning we  
14          were in Guánica. We had a full house as well. A lot of  
15          participation, much interest from Guánica, the epicenter, to  
16          also fix its properties.

17          We have the form for comments here at the  
18          registration table and the issue of property title. Right,  
19          we know that sometimes we have twenty family mishaps. That  
20          if my grandfather left it to me, that my grandfather's  
21          grandfather of my grandfather. The lady laughs. Right, that  
22          shouldn't prevent you from submitting your application.

23          Okay. Certainly, you submit your application.

24          When we get to that point, we also have to

1 a program that clarifies property titles. We try  
2 to solve all these mishaps. That's at the Property  
3 Registry, the CRIM is involved, there are notaries involved  
4 and it is often a costly process. That's why the program  
5 provides that assistance, right, to clarify these property  
6 titles and so you can have your property title, formally,  
7 for new disasters. Because, unfortunately, even if we don't  
8 want to, we'll experience other nature disasters.

9 Very well. Now, having, having remembered all  
10 that, right, let's move on then to the turns that have been  
11 requested to publicly express views on this first amendment  
12 to the earthquake and tropical storm Isaiás action plan. We  
13 are now going to offer our turn to Mr. Nelson Samot, who  
14 visits us from the Municipality of Yauco. And we have him  
15 here.

16 Mr. Nelson, if you can stand up and reach the middle of  
17 the room, there's a microphone so that we can all listen to  
18 you. Mr. Nelson is going to have five minutes as  
19 instructed. Oh, Mr. Nelson has a tremendous representation  
20 there. What's your name?

21 MS. LISANDRA CABÁN:

22 Lisandra Cabán.

23 MODERATOR:

24 Lisandra Cabán. And I am my husband's representative

1 as well. Lisandra, that happens to me too. And you are  
2 also from Yauco, I imagine, because if not we would have a  
3 problem. Okay.

4 MS. LISANDRA CABÁN:

5 Right, we're here today. Everyone knows why  
6 we're here, because of the loss due to the earthquakes. If  
7 you see this folder, this folder contains all the processes  
8 that we did with FEMA and are appeals. So, I believe that  
9 some people, right, are in the same position as us. It's been  
10 two and a half years and FEMA didn't want to disburse a  
11 single dollar because they said we had a mortgage insurance.

12 Mortgage insurance answers to the bank, not to us,  
13 they told us. So, when you lose the house, the insurance  
14 answers the bank and we are left in the air. Nothing  
15 happened. We, right, there's my husband, there's me, my two  
16 children, and we didn't know what to do. I always put  
17 myself in God's hands, right, the situation, and there were  
18 always people who helped us during the process. My sister,  
19 the sister-in-law rented us houses, lent us money while we  
20 regrouped, right.

21 We are currently living in Cabo Rojo. It's a home of  
22 one of my husband's bosses. We were to stay there until we  
23 could resolve the situation. Because we have gone to  
24 different agencies. We do not qualify with the Department of  
25 Housing



1 because he works and has an income. I am unemployed,  
2 I am a housewife.

3 We ran to apply for the CDBG funds. We do not qualify  
4 with those funds because we have a property. Which property?  
5 The land with a house that they came to demolish in December  
6 and in January the debris was collected. It's already been  
7 three years and we feel that we can do nothing but cross our  
8 arms because we are truly tired of the situation. What have  
9 we not done? I am a professional, so is he. We are not  
10 saying that we are people who live off the government.

11 We are people who decided to work to fight for what we had.

12 Nearly twenty years of mortgage we lost it in one go  
13 and the blink of an eye, right. And you know what? In one  
14 of the... of the... of the meetings that were being held by  
15 the mayor of Yauco, there was a seventy-four-year-old man in  
16 line with us, saying that he had lost fifty-nine years of  
17 his working life and in the blink of an eye, right, he lost  
18 his house too. He said, "With what am I going to get a  
19 mortgage now? With a Social Security that pays me a  
20 pittance?"

21 We are really doing our best, but we still feel that  
22 the doors are closed. Although we see, right, that these  
23 funds are coming to Puerto Rico, we still do not see  
24 mobility. Here in one of the points that I raised,

1 right, this document I did it like five times. I wrote a  
2 ranting letter of about ten pages. My husband said to me "You  
3 are writing a lot. No one is going to listen to that." I  
4 said, "Well, I'm going to reduce". I reduced them by six and  
5 now I'm going to reduce it to one page.

6 "We are living in a time when corruption in the  
7 management of federal and state funds is rampant. How can we  
8 know if we qualify for assistance if we were not even given  
9 proof of filling out the application, evidence that they  
10 received all the documentation that we turned in? That is  
11 one of my complaints.

12 Look, this folder, the second one, are the documents  
13 that we have delivered to the program. How do you know if you  
14 are really in the good hands of responsible and committed  
15 people handling everyone's case correctly? How to know that  
16 we are on a waiting list? Because we do not have an  
17 application number. I don't have it and I delivered all  
18 these documents.

19 How do we know what we qualify for if there is  
20 nothing written to establish it? There is no document that  
21 tells me, "Look, yes, this was delivered by you. You  
22 qualify for this." How do you know if the money allocated  
23 for home rehabilitation will be used correctly? How do we  
24 know that what we are given corresponds to the need  
25 presented? At this time, we don't have a home.

1           How do you know if you are really helping those  
2 in need and not mindless politicians who seek to take  
3 advantage of those funds, either for individuals who do not  
4 need them or unseemly contractors hungry for money? How to  
5 know if there is transparency in these allocated funds? It's  
6 been three years already, and we don't even know how they  
7 will be disbursed in a correct manner.

8           I leave all these doubts on the table for those who are  
9 called upon to answer them in writing. And if there is no  
10 prompt response, this letter will be passed on to the  
11 corresponding agency for the correct follow-up of the case  
12 that concerns every Puerto Rican in the south who lost a  
13 home. Please do not hesitate to contact us in case  
14 additional information is required. We request a written  
15 response from the application that we filed. Sincerely, a  
16 family that makes a fair claim almost three years after the  
17 earthquakes."

18 Thank you and sorry for the rant, but it's three years in  
19 January we are really no longer... we can't hold on any  
20 longer.

21 MODERATOR:

22           Thank you, Lisandra. Nelson, were you going to say  
23 something?

24 MR. NELSON SAMOT:

25           Yes, I was... FEMA responded to me and after two

1 years and a half, now in the summer they decided to help me,  
2 but to the level that I had to set an alarm for my cell  
3 phone at five o'clock in the afternoon every day to call  
4 them. I was tired of receiving refusals from some of them.

5 I tell the public not to give up because that is what  
6 FEMA wants. You continue to fight and prove that you...  
7 because there's so much corruption, you have to prove that  
8 this is true. What you are requesting is true. FEMA already  
9 answered me positively, see?

10 Now we went to the municipality, we took the letter to  
11 the mayor and the mayor read it and said to me "Now keep the  
12 letter, keep your money, that within the funds and that,  
13 we're going to...". But that was in the summer. Each time  
14 I'd go there, the response was "Come in two months, come in  
15 three months" and now they told me "Come at the end of  
16 January." And so, the ball keeps rolling and rolling, and in  
17 the meantime, we are struggling to see what can be done, but  
18 we don't see the light, except that the money from FEMA is  
19 there.

20 Of course, I can't use it for anything else, nothing  
21 but for the house. Therefore, I am looking to see how to  
22 handle the thing.

23 MODERATOR:

24 Nelson and Lisandra, thank you very much for sharing  
25 your experience, making your recommendations without doubt

1 to the program. I want to yield the turn to the program  
2 director, Carlos Olmedo.

3 OLMEDO, ESQ.:

4 What you wrote and I know you commented here...  
5 I have people taking notes, but if you want to deliver it.

6 MODERATOR:

7 And it's being recorded.

8 OLMEDO, ESQ.:

9 And recorded, but if you want to turn it in for the  
10 record in writing, you can hand it in at the back table and  
11 it will be... it will be included in the documents that we  
12 include in the report. You will be able to see it on our  
13 website and HUD will receive them.

14 So, if you explain in more detail everything that  
15 you want, you can do it. Likewise, you have until December  
16 31 if you wish to submit any other comments through our  
17 website or send them to the Department of Housing, you may  
18 also do so.

19 I don't know which programs you have applied for, but  
20 if you have Housing from CDBG-DR funds, this is the first  
21 program, the first and only program that deals with  
22 earthquake cases in Puerto Rico. The previous ones we have  
23 are all for cases of Hurricanes Irma and María. All are  
24 CDBG-DR for Irma and María and this is the first of  
25 earthquakes.

1           So, if there were any... who might want to try to help  
2 when he mentioned that he applied, but does not have an  
3 application number, I'm willing to bet it's not ours,  
4 because this is the first one and we have not accepted any  
5 applications yet. However, if you have the details, we can  
6 check them if it's a yes in some cases. Sure.

7 MR. NELSON SAMOT:

8           One last little thing for people to listen to this.  
9 When I received the news, that I got a call from FEMA,  
10 that it was a director, a supervisor, a week later... two  
11 weeks later, I get a call from COR3 and I have the name, but  
12 I don't know if it's wise to mention it, but the person asks  
13 me, "How did you get FEMA to approve you?" I was like, "What  
14 do you mean? I told the entire truth. I have it all  
15 documented, I submitted it, the bank gave me a negative.  
16 Talking to them over there without me knowing, and all the  
17 time negative, negative, negative, negative."

18           He says "How did you do it? Because your case was  
19 known in Yauco as the case of Yauco, the little case of  
20 Yauco," he told me, "And it went up to the Executive." I ask  
21 him, the gentleman, "How? Did it reach the governor?" and he  
22 tells me "No, the Executive means the higher-ups at  
23 Housing," and I was like, "How come?" and he says "Yes, your  
24 case is the first one that FEMA approves under the

1 earthquakes."

2 And I say this because it can be done. I did nothing  
3 else but, every time they asked for it, I sent it, sent it,  
4 and sent it. Then they would tell me, "Where's X document?"

5 I'd answer "Yeah, I got it." They'd open the computer and  
6 I'd tell them, "Give me a little chance." Sometimes I'd spend  
7 up to three hours with the FEMA person until it was approved.  
8 He was surprised and I was even more surprised when I  
9 received that call. How did you do it? I don't know.

10 OLMEDO, ESQ.:

11 Can you tell me the...

12 MR. NELSON SAMOT:

13 But, but I have the name. That is, if you want to,  
14 we can talk about it later, but he told me "You broke  
15 the Executive ceiling."

16 OLMEDO, ESQ.:

17 Continue.

18 MR. NELSON SAMOT:

19 But it was not the governor. They call  
20 the higher-ups the Executive.

21 OLMEDO, ESQ.:

22 Yes, I looked at my partner when you mentioned the  
23 part of Housing. We do not handle FEMA funds,  
24 but continue doing what you are doing.

1 MR. NELSON SAMOT:

2 No, but that the call...

3 OLMEDO, ESQ.:

4 Apply and continue there. Okay. Both at the same time.  
5 We manage HUD funds.

6 MR. NELSON SAMOT:

7 But what I mean by that is that there is a connection  
8 because they found out about it. I did not call that  
9 gentleman, he called me.

10 MODERATOR:

11 Oh, I'm glad they found out, I'm glad they found out  
12 and I'm glad that things are moving. Stop, stop...  
13 to clarify the record... Thank you, Nelson and Lisandra.

14 MR. NELSON SAMOT:

15 Okay. Thank you for listening to us.

16 MODERATOR:

17 Your statements have been recorded, and we invite you  
18 to provide the information in writing to make it a part of  
19 the documentation of this hearing. For the benefit of other  
20 colleagues, as mentioned by the director of the program,  
21 these are HUD funds which is the Federal Housing Department.  
22 These are not FEMA funds.

23 COR3 is also another agency, right, which works with  
24 recovery, but we are also not the Department of the  
25 Housing neither state nor federal. And that request, right,



1 that Nelson and Lisandra shared with us, which they did  
2 and which was eventually approved, does not prevent you from  
3 applying under this program that is aimed at earthquake  
4 recovery, right.

5 We have many recovery funds. We have been hearing this  
6 for some time, but they were set for María and Irma.  
7 Different from what we do in our homes, right, that when  
8 holes appear, holes, right, we cover, we cover the phone  
9 bill with the money for the water bill, and the power bill  
10 with the grocery money, right, and we're plugging holes,  
11 aren't we?

12 Everyone says yes because that's just the way it is, right.  
13 Different from that, federal funds won't let us do that.

14 They had to be for needs stemming from Irma and María.  
15 So, we couldn't plug earthquake holes, see? Now we have been  
16 given the opportunity of these specific funds and well-  
17 focused on the southern municipalities, well-focused on the  
18 southern municipalities, recognizing that although we also  
19 felt the shakeout in San Juan, right, from time to time,  
20 these communities are the most affected and are the ones in  
21 most need.

22 So now they've opened up that door, now we can plug  
23 earthquake holes. OK? So that does not prevent you from  
24 applying under the program. That's right. And I make it  
25 clear, right, for anyone else

1 who is also in that situation with COR3, with FEMA, and so  
2 on, that you can, you can also identify that you will be  
3 able to apply under these funds and be eligible anyway. OK?  
4 And be eligible.

5 I want to invite anyone else in the audience  
6 who wants to express themselves, who wants to take this  
7 moment to pronounce themselves, and that their expressions  
8 are entered in the record as part of the public hearing  
9 works this afternoon in Lajas. Even if you were not  
10 initially registered, you may do so now and identify  
11 yourself on the microphone.

12 Well. Well, then you know that you have up to  
13 December 31 to submit your comments online on the website,  
14 through regular mail, and today, we also have the form on  
15 the registration page. Jorge is identifying them in order to  
16 fill them out and then they can be sent by regular mail if  
17 they are not motivated to express themselves today.

18 Well. We thank Carlos and we thank, of course, the  
19 Nelson and Lisandra for making their statements this  
20 afternoon. So, let's conclude this process for the First  
21 Substantial Amendment of the Action Plan to the 2019-2020  
22 Earthquakes and Tropical Storm Isaiás 2020 Response under  
23 CDBG-DR funds of the Department of Housing of Puerto Rico.

1           We'd like to thank all the attendees for their  
2 presence, the speakers for making their pronouncements and  
3 such valuable comments. We remind you that we will be  
4 accepting comments until December 31 of this year  
5 and that it is important to share these suggestions with us,  
6 these recommendations, that experience that they have had  
7 because it all strengthens the process. We are starting with  
8 this process and everything that we can strengthen and make  
9 it better than before... well, you have out commitment that  
10 we will do so.

11           Any questions about the presentation by  
12 director Carlos Olmedo? Any questions, not that you want to  
13 express anything, but who has a question to better  
14 understand the times. Today, December 14, we are here and  
15 this is our fifth public hearing. We have already been in  
16 Ponce, Guayanilla, Yauco, and this morning we were in  
17 Guánica; five public hearings.

18           We will accept comments until December 31,  
19 suggestions, criticisms, insults, everything. Not lies.  
20 Comments and suggestions, right. And then, in 2023, we are  
21 going to start these orientations to the communities. We  
22 will be visiting all the municipalities. The municipalities  
23 are very committed to these efforts.

24           Naturally, they have, indeed, put all their energy in  
25 this entity called CONSUR. Thus, we allow this entity to

1 uniformly administer those funds for the purpose of these  
2 seven municipalities. And God willing, in the month of  
3 February, we start the application process. All those who  
4 are here have to apply, and today they take... No, don't  
5 stop applying, apply and after they evaluate and tell you  
6 what you have to evaluate, but do not quit before starting  
7 the process.

8 And everyone leaves with a task. The people from Lajas  
9 are not here. Many people are missing. We are all leaving  
10 with the task of carrying the voice, of spreading the voice  
11 to our friends, relatives, neighbors, that the process is  
12 coming, and that everyone has to apply. Okay? So, I leave  
13 you with that assignment. Thank you very much and have a  
14 good afternoon.

15 \* \* \*

16 THE PUBLIC HEARING WAS ADJOURNED

17 \* \* \*

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1 DATE : December 14, 2022  
2 TIME : 4:00 p.m.  
3 CLIENT : DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING  
4  
5

6 STENOGRAPHER'S CERTIFICATE  
7  
8

9 I CERTIFY that the foregoing is a true and accurate  
10 transcription of the record taken by the undersigned of the  
11 proceedings held during this public hearing.

12 In San Juan, Puerto Rico, on January 4th, 2023.  
13  
14  
15  
16

17 DANIEL FIGUEROA SANABRIA  
18 STENOGRAPHER  
19  
20  
21  
22  
23  
24  
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**OGMA**  
LANGUAGE STUDIO

This document is a true and accurate translation of the source text.

DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING  
CDBG-DR PROGRAM  
SAN JUAN, PUERTO RICO

RE: FIRST AMENDMENT (SUBSTANTIAL) \*  
OF THE ACTION PLAN FOR THE \*  
RECOVERY IN RESPONSE TO \*  
EARTHQUAKES AND STORM \* ISAIAS  
OF THE CDBG-DR FUNDS \*

\*\*\*\*\*

PUBLIC HEARING

DATE: November 28, 2022

TIME : 4:43 p.m.

CLIENT : DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING CDBG-DR PROGRAM

ADDRESS: 606 Barbosa Avenue, 8th Floor  
San Juan, Puerto Rico

HELD IN: Municipal Legislature  
Ponce, Puerto Rico

COMPARISONERS

MODERATOR:

Ms. Maricarmen Figueroa Correa

PRESIDENTIAL TABLE:

Ms. Maria Ivette Cabeza Díaz - Associate Secretary of  
Disaster Recovery

Mr. Carlos Olmedo Álvarez - Planner and Secretary  
Planning Assistant

Dr. Luis M. Irizarry Pabón - Mayor  
Municipality of Ponce

Atty. Carlos Jirau - Executive Director of  
the Consortium (CONSUR)

TRANSCRIPTOR:

Mr. Jeancarlos Laracuenta Rodríguez, Executive Secretary

\* \* \*

The procedures were carried out as shown in the following transcript.

\* \* \*

Ms. Moderator:

Welcome to this first public hearing of the First Substantial Amendment of the Puerto Rico Department of Housing's CDBG-DR Action Plan For Recovery In Response To Earthquakes 2019, 2020 and Tropical Storm Isaias 2020, which addresses the needs of affected residents in the municipalities of Guánica, Guayanilla, Lajas, Mayagüez, Peñuelas, Ponce and Yauco. My name is María del Carmen Figueroa and I am Assistant Secretary of the Division of Federal Compliance and Subrecipient Management, and today, Monday, November 28, 2022, being 4:43 in the afternoon, I will serve as moderator from the Municipal Legislature of the Municipality of Ponce, whom we thank for hosting us this afternoon. We notify you that we have the assistance of a translator for the English language and a sign language interpreter for the benefit of the community that needs it.

Let's officially welcome and introduce our guests, of course. To the Honorable Mayor of Ponce, Luis M. Irizarry Pabón. Greetings Mr. Mayor, for receiving us here in your home, where we are right now. We are also joined by Maria Ivette Cabeza Diaz, who is Associate Secretary for Disaster Recovery in the Division of Public and Community Affairs. And you are also joined by Carlos Olmedo Álvarez, Assistant Secretary of Planning. We will then give the floor to the Mayor so that he may give us a brief greeting.



Dr. Luis M. Irizarry Pabón, Mayor:

Thank you, God bless you all. Thanks to the Department of Housing, to your officials for being here at this hearing. I am well honored by your presence. Formally, I would like to thank you on behalf of the six municipalities that lead the Consortium, CONSUR, which are the municipalities that are working with the earthquakes recovery. Eh... it is truly an honor for me as mayor to have them and... obviously to have all those who are going to participate in these public visits to outline and elaborate the action plan so that this recovery from earthquakes is in a way as we all want, accelerated, that is, working, promptly, that is why it is the formation of the Southern Consortium, CONSUR. Likewise, I know that Mr. Carlos Jirau, who is our Executive Director of the Consortium, who will be working for all these six towns that are involved in it, is on his way. Hey... This view, we are going to work today, Ponce, then in the next few days, tomorrow, I understand it will be in Yauco and then other dates that will be in the different towns that have been affected, and that we have been, as I told you, in collaboration, that is why I also thank the Secretary of Housing, his officers, because we have been working intensely so that this Consortium, not only is formed as it is forming, but also that the processes that both the citizens of Ponce and the southern area of Puerto Rico yearn for and want be given promptness. That's why we're here. So I warmly welcome you to this precinct of the Ponce City Legislature, on behalf of the Autonomous Municipality of Ponce. Thanks a lot. May God bless me.

Thank you Mayor. Hey... Definitely, we have been immersed in this recovery process together with the programmatic area, all the operations and support areas have been immersed in this process so that precisely this recovery is agile,

be responsible and inclusive; And that's why we're doing up to five public hearings, so that everyone who has something to contribute to this recovery process can do so.

Not bad. Thank you very much Mayor, we thank you, the entire team for the collaboration and above all for hosting this afternoon.

The Department of Housing convened for today, Monday, November 28, 2022, this public hearing with the purpose of hearing comments and / or proposals from the affected residents in the municipalities of Guánica, Guayanilla, Lajas, Mayagüez, Peñuelas, Ponce and Yauco; In addition, the general public. This hearing is part of the federal requirement and the citizen participation process to receive comments on this first amendment to this plan, to this Action Plan. This includes unmet needs following Tropical Storm Isaias, a new needs assessment for the use of the mitigation fund reserve, and data on efforts. of public disclosure and participation of entities with interest, after the publication of the original action plan. The original Action Plan remains available for review by the general public on our website [www.cdbg-dr.pr.gov](http://www.cdbg-dr.pr.gov). The day November 18, 2022, the notice of public hearings was published in the newspaper El Nuevo Día, page 45, as required by the regulations. We notify you that this view is being recorded and will subsequently be posted on or before December 5 on our Youtube channel CDBG-DR Puerto Rico. The public comment acceptance period for this amendment has been available from November 4 to December 4; You can even visit our website [cdbg-dr.pr.gov](http://cdbg-dr.pr.gov) to read the First Amendment and submit your comments through the online form or email [infocdbg@vivienda.pr.gov](mailto:infocdbg@vivienda.pr.gov). Also, you can send them by postal mail to P0 BOX 365, San Juan, PR 00928-1365.

The rules for the public view are as follows: Have registered at the entrance to depose and/or express interest during the hearing. Shifts shall be awarded on a first-come, first-served basis. A five-minute slot shall be granted to each deponent. This turn is not transferable to another deponent. Before depositioning, you must identify yourself for registration purposes and indicate your name, town of origin, identity to which you belong. The presentation should be on issues related to the First Substantial Amendment of the Action Plan for Recovery In Response To The 2019-2020 Earthquakes and Tropical Storm Isaias 2020 under the CDBG-DR Funds. Each deponent must respect the interests of others and maintain silence during the public hearing. The moderator will tell you when your turn is due. All the people who are participating in this public, must promote an atmosphere of respect, and with that, we terminate the rules, truth, that we will be observing during this public hearing.

We will then receive planner Carlos Olmedo to inform us about this First Substantial Amendment of the Action Plan for Recovery In Response To The 2019-2020 Earthquakes and Tropical Storm Isaias 2020 under the CDBG-DR Funds of the Puerto Rico Department of Housing. In this way, you can learn more about the Program and issue your comments, which we will be listening to this afternoon. Carlos.

Planner. Carlos Olmedo Alvarez:

Good afternoon, does everyone see the screens? Yes, perfect. Hey... There are many, there are some terms and so on, so, I'm going to try to explain them as clearly as possible. If some of the terms don't understand something, I ... Let me know. So, what we are going to present here as, as Mari Carmen mentioned, there is already an approved plan, an approved action plan. Hey... but this is one, the first amendment to the Action

Plan, because funds were received additional and some were made, some modifications, eh ... to the original idea of the Plan. So, it is considered a substantial amendment to the original document and that is why the whole approval process is done for public hearing again. I'm going to explain a little bit of the history of how these funds come in and then I'm going to talk to you about the major change we're going to be making. Hey... these funds that we're going to be, that we're going to be discussing from the Action Plan come as a result of seismic events that started, in, they're not over yet, but They started in 2019. The major events 2019 and 2022, in those Christmases of 2019 and 2020. Hey... And because of them a year later on January 6, 2021, eh... what is a *federal registry*, which is a, the document in which the Federal Government talks about the funds that it is going to be giving, in this HUD case, the funds that you're going to be giving to the different jurisdictions for DR, which is disaster recovery, which is disaster recovery, which is this DR fund. Also in Puerto Rico other CDBG funds are managed and the surname is seen. Do you see the hairline in the last name? Well, it can be mitigation, uh... there is CBD-COVID. In this case they are CDBG-DR. Puerto Rico is published and awarded \$36 million. In that publication, once it is published, conversations begin between the Government of Puerto Rico and the Federal Government. And then huh... as part of these negotiations, work is beginning on what has become the Plan of Action. Hey... an Action Plan is approved on January 5, 2022 and the Program for the Rehabilitation and Reconstruction of Homes due to Earthquakes, SR2, is created. This program is now modified, one of the proposals we are presenting is the modification of this program and the creation of what is the..., a third "r", which is going to be relocation. As part of those conversations and the... the conditions that, put by Congress, which is the one who approves the funds and the... and HUD, uh... 80 percent of these 36 million had to be used in four

municipalities. Those were the municipalities of Guayanilla, Yauco, Guánica and Ponce. Hey... and was distributed in those four a 5 by One hundred administrative funds, which was decided at that time... Well, we are going to use all the funds because what is left over is little, we are going to use all the funds in the four municipalities. There have been some additional conversations and as a result of other funds that we are going to talk about now, an additional 184 million comes in for a new federal registry, for a new *federal registry*, which was published this year. Hey... As the events continued, the telluric events continued, and something important about CDBG-DR, is that they are funds that cover unmet needs. When it was... when the first Action Plan was worked on, there were still damages that were being processed. Hey... mainly by FEMA. Hey... Once the damages of those events were processed, they realized that there were some needs, that there was more need for the fund that had been originally granted. Hey... that unmet need, corresponds to basically, an evaluation is made of how much funds are necessary to recover, it is evaluated how much FEMA granted, how much was granted through other agencies, uh... it varies the cases in cases, but, SBA, Rural and so on, and that difference is ..., the Federal Government, is not an exact calculation, but based on that difference, it grants additional funds. In this case, for housing through CDBG, they could grant them to funds for businesses, but in this case, they were only granted for housing. And so these 184 million arrive. And they arrive with different restrictions from the original money. These 184 million also include the municipality of Mayagüez, but it is due to tropical storm Isaias. So there are some funds, within those 184, there are about 7 million. Later let's talk about that, which are for Mayagüez. The rest of the money is distributed among the original four municipalities, and includes Peñuelas and Lajas. So, we have 36 million plus 184, at the end of the day we have 221 million, which the vast majority is to attend to situations ... the... the..., properties

affected after earthquakes.

What are we going to do? In... in... That's what, up to that was where we were in the original plan when we sat down with the Municipalities with this, this new... Action Plan. Hey... well, the request of the mayors, negotiation with the Secretary, it is decided to make this eh... A new creation, we had never done it and that is to grant or allow the municipalities to manage eh... be... He, the manager, so to speak, handle the funds directly to the people. The municipalities do manage CDBG-DR funds, but they do send funds for construction, essentially for public infrastructure. Hey... Never, to date, had they handled construction funds for homes. On this occasion, this... The, the, this is a significant change, uh... And the Southern Consortium is created, which includes the six municipalities that will be working on this, this type of construction. So, in this way, uh... the Consortium is created, and the Consortium is going to be, who is going to attend directly to... to the... to the public. Obviously they're going to recruit staff, they're going to see construction contractors, companies and so on, but it's through this Consortium of Municipalities. That if you, any of you know the R3 Program, the R3 Program directly managed by Housing, in this case, then there is the municipality and then we come and what you are going to do ... Manage repair, reconstruction and relocation efforts. This new "r", which was not included in the original version, in the original Action Plan, did give the possibility that there would be some relocations but we were going to manage it with other funds that we have with CDBG-MIT Funds, for mitigation, but In this case, through these funds they will be able to be managed. So how is the distribution? Here we have the four of us , uh... Well, I put them in an alphabetical color but, there are the four originals more... more Lajas and Peñuelas. Hey... This, this is the budget, is being changed. Originally, Lajas y Peñuelas had no budget, but since... "Is it me or is it the lights are vibrating?" Yes, oka. Ok, since eh... hey... we are going to

start the Consortium we did not want to leave them at 0, we wanted them to be able to start like the rest of the municipalities. So, uh... It was granted money that was not 80 percent, \$ 1.7 million to each of the municipalities to be able to e... hey... Start to... to... the process of interviewing people, evaluating houses, designing and others of the first assignment. This is reorganized. A budget is generated for CONSUR operations because CONSUR is created, but CONSUR is not a municipality, therefore, it is a grouping between municipalities that will have its own management, its own employees and others; it's going to have its office to serve the public, its website and everything, so it's given a fund for operation. And Mayagüez and Mitigation have nothing because they are going to receive it from the second assignment. Mayagüez was not within the first, first assignment. I mean, when I get there, I'll explain this. This is administrative money from Housing, which is the money that Housing uses for all processes; paying employees who are going to be working with the Program and other expenses that the Program has. This is standard , this is 5 percent standard for everything... In this case... for all the CDBG-DR programs and this is the totality of what we have from the second allocation, which is \$184 million, this is the distribution that is being made. These distributions are made according to the damages that each municipality received. So, the first one... Allocation was made with the damages that existed when the first allocation was granted. More damage was worked, there were more claims and so on and the second assignment was reached. Hey... And here, there was a question that I was asked the other days, we have, certainly we have municipalities that were, we can say closer to the epicenter, than their..., the properties, the houses, suffered greater damage, but in my equal way we have maybe municipalities that were a little further away, that have A larger population, more houses were damaged, maybe less damage, but it was more volume of houses. We have that competition between "x" number of houses with high damage and "x" plus "y" number of houses

with less damage, but when you add everything up they compete with each other. And here then, that's the distribution of allocations, okay, it's a few percent according to the damages assessed by FEMA and the aid granted by FEMA. Remember that this is... They are funds for, uh... Cover unmet needs. So a lot of the analysis is based on what FEMA covered and what FEMA didn't. And this is the totality, this, this last column that we have here, uh... more, everything more eh... Blackened is what, what, the, the totality, the final background. What we are going to be working on and what we are going to be approving on this occasion. Mayagüez, the \$7 million that I mentioned to you from Mayagüez, which is separate, is for them to work on the floods, after the hurricane... Tropical Storm Isaias, and eh... the, it is added, is added to CONSUR and... they go to, more money from the second allocation to operate equal to Housing, more money in the second allocation to operate. And in the area of Mitigation, this is \$28 million that is going to be used to ... Mitigation projects in communities, residences and so on, OK? Hey... I'm ... I let you know this is what we are pretense ..., presenting for approval, most likely over time there may be other changes, and that will do according to You can see, how the program is working, uh... You can create an additional program, if there is that need, you can also reorganize the funds, if there is a fund that is not being used, that you think that there will be a surplus of an item that is needed. That has happened with the plan, with the CDBG-DR Action Plan for Puerto Rico, which we are going for the most important thing.

seventh? novena? We're already on the ninth. It's totally normal, and it's going to continue to happen in any of the programs. So we can see each other in a year or two, either reorganizing this to meet needs or adding money. It's not going to be taken away. Not that... This, this money is already allocated for what this is... this money is allocated for what is, in two programs, which is this program of Relocation,



Reconstruction and Reparation, and that of Mayagüez. The funds of Mayagüez. Why am I not talking much about the Mayagüez Funds? Because I still have... there hasn't been one, a complete development of what that program is, but it's a repair program, it's going to be an R3 program, uh... most likely it is R2, repair and reconstruction in homes. Ok. This program is going to be very similar to the program that we are using from R3 in mitigation eh... Because the wheel is already invented, because there are already some processes that are already running, the difference is that this time instead of you ask us, the... the... the... There is the municipality who is, who is going to attend to the situations, right? It is the municipality that will be visiting the communities, uh... They invite us, we participate and so on, but they are going to... It is the municipalities who are going to be eco-piling, they are going to be managing those who are... The companies, the companies that are helping in the damage assessment, the designs, the construction processes, it's going to be the municipalities who are going to be managing that, in that aspect. Hey... The intention is to repair eh... or rebuild homes. The difference between repair... repair and reconstruction, are... It's the magnitude of the damage and the costs, right? There are houses that are simply repaired and others that have to demolish sections and rebuild sections; uh... In the event that it is not possible to e... That is, a risk, true, it is not possible because there is a risk for families to stay living in that area, because there is the relocation of housing. The maximum allocation for rehabilitation is 60 thousand dollars per housing unit, for reconstruction it is 180 thousand dollars, this includes the demolition process eh... And in the case that elevation applies, this, that is, is an additional fund that there is, because there are 265,000 for reconstruction of house and raise the house. Or at least the sections of the house, which, if it is in cement, the section of the house that leave... which is to be rebuilt, including demolition. Eligible, homeowners only.

As I mentioned, this is not... This program is not designed, the funds did not come for small traders, ok? For commerce... for commerce... For commercial structures, it is only for residential structures. This is our page, this is the Department of Housing page. Hey... when you open the page, you will see an announcement about these public visits, if not, you can go to the Action Plan part and this will also appear... The Earthquake Action Plan. Hey...

We're already, right, on the page is, the first amendment, which is what we're talking about. You, desca... Press this button and you can lower the... the document. If you want to submit a comment, press this button and you will get the window to submit comments, if you wish, this is English and Spanish. If you want it in English, click here and the page automatically changes from Spanish to English, so, there is no difference. Today we are in this public hearing, originally, public view today 28 and tomorrow 29 but eh... mayors, mayors requested more public hearings. There's no problem with that. You're going to see one on Dec. 9 and another on Dec. 14. Tomorrow's is at 10:00 a.m. in the Community Center of the Playa neighborhood in Yauco. And the next ones, on December 9 at 9:00 a.m. at the Bo Community Center. Beach, likewise, of Guayanilla. Did they change it?... I can't change it now, because the computer is there, but tomorrow it's in the Legislature. I change it orita. That was my... On December 14 eh... at 10:00 a.m. at the Puerto Rican Club of the Senate in Guánica and at 4:00 p.m., this day will be interesting, at the Anastasio Ruiz Cultural Center in Lajas. Yes. Any comments you have, in addition to the comments you are going to present to the document, which is on the little page that I told you orita, you can write to this email, that those who are at that table are the ones who review them, and this is the Housing page in case you need access to the Department of Housing page, OKA? Now, everyone who wants to comment...

Ms. Moderator:

Thank you Carlos. We will continue with our public view. We want to recognize the presence of the Executive Director of the Consortium of the South, as we affectionately call him, CONSUR, Mr. Carlos Jirau. Greetings licensed.

Not bad. Hey... And now we are going to move on to the rapporteurs who registered this afternoon. First, let's go to give his five-minute turn to Mr. Ismael González, CEO of A... ALT *International*. Greetings and welcome.

Don Ismael González Belén:

Greetings, huh... Good afternoon everyone, blessings to all. Ismael González Belén, President - CEO of ALT *International Development*. We are a manufacturing company of building materials, we make blocks in " ", rods in glass ... We still make doors, windows and cabinets. In addition to that, we developed what is eh... real estate from *affordable houses*, to condominiums. We are participating in this public hearing and it is thanks to the Legislature for receiving us because our plan is to establish in Ponce our main factory, maintain in Mexico, we are in hot waters, we export all over the world but then put establish in Ponce, in the part of Ponce our factory main. We are going to have the capacity or produce up to 500 houses per month with basically everything that means doors, windows and others and we will be generating 300 jobs in the area. Hey... I bring this up because we have the best interest that we participate with CONSUR and with the Municipality, eh... to help in the rebuilding of Ponce and at the level of obviously what is the south, and Puerto Rico as a whole. In fact, we are going to be helping different reconstructions at the Caribbean level and at the South American level , eh... And obviously in the state also eh... of the Gulf and the Southwestern United States. So, my congratulations to all, thank you for being

here and I hope to share with you later. Thank you very much.

Ms. Moderator:

Many thanks to... to Mr. Ismael González for making himself available for these recovery processes. We are now going to move on to Don Teodoro Laboy, who is a citizen of Ponce. That's where Don Teodoro goes.

Don Teodoro Jesús Laboy Pérez:

Good afternoon, I respond to the name of Teodoro Jesús Laboy Pérez. Born and raised in the Belgium neighborhood of Ponce, together with the organization Santa María de Nuestra Ciudad. I am a journalist, teacher, merchant and politician too. I have participated, and continue to participate, in the political process, because it is the responsibility of every citizen. Although, I understand, first from the literature and second from the guidance that has been offered to us, that the main theme is the repair, reconstruction of housing units, but in the particular case of the pearl of the south, the earthquake affected many structures dedicated to commerce, to offices of professions and also in their best time, housing units, and... Bearing in mind that most career or electoral appointed public officials, whatever, are very well-intentioned people, etc. Mostly very trained, uh... I must look at you right, I say she is prettier than you but... [laughter among those present]. I'm following the protocol then... Madam Moderator: don, don, don Teodoro do not ask you, we are not going to question you. Don Teodoro Jesús Laboy Pérez: aha, thank you. Madam Moderator: your expression. Don Teodoro Laboy Pérez: Thank you very much. Hey... but this is a defect not only of the Puerto Rican Nation, right, but also of all the nations of the world, the bureaucracy, that is a disease of generations. The great Ponce Hernandez Columbus, called the bureaucracy a "leviatam"... or a huge monster, and with its own strength, its own independence of operation, and sometimes well-intentioned, well-prepared, experienced people

fall victim to the clutches of bureaucracy and many times we opt for expeditious actions that do not necessarily take into account other factors such as the aesthetics of structures. The great architectural beauty of Ponce is unique, not only in Puerto Rico, but throughout the... the... the hemisphere, and... I come here without ignoring that basically the main theme is housing, making recommendations to decision-making officials, who are going to make decisions; I make the spectrum that take into account that unique phenomenon of La Perla del Sur, its architecture. Not only the neoclassical, uh... the Spanish Renaissance, uh... There are many samples of... of those styles in our city, but also, more modern styles such as the "ArdecO", which, although the structure... The structures that exhibit them do not... do not serve, we... He has needed to demolish them, that the facades be preserved. I arrived 12 years ago, I spend my autumns in New England, where the great American nation was born, and there is a culture of preservation of... of architectural styles. Hey... There have been huge battles to prevent modern agents from disappearing, that vital heritage in the community life of their cities and they have been... Many of those battles have been won. That... That is my recommendation this afternoon. Let those who make the decisions, those who have the power to decide, not ignore that reality. Ponce has to preserve that "unique cabis... in its architecture, particularly in the historic center of the city to remain Ponce. Thank you so much.

Ms. Moderator:

We thank... to Don Teodoro, also his expression in this, in this public hearing. We invite at this time anyone else who wants to... collaborate, who wants to contribute, make an expression, uh... He would have to identify himself with his name, uh... of what people visit us and make their expression. You will have the same time of five minutes. So, if you haven't been encouraged

before and are cheering up now, go ahead. Please, his full name, from which town he visits us, we also know the companion and very happy to see him.

Alexander Wolf:

Yes, good afternoon. My name is Alexander Wolf and I visit you from the Municipality of Ponce, from this neighborhood. I wasn't going to say, but Don Teodoro inspired me because I wanted to follow up on what he was saying. I believe that the... We would all agree that the value eh... hey... historical P eleven is perhaps the... The, the most important value eh... what does this town have... and... and... and... is, that's largely huh... of, of the historic houses eh... of, of the Center, also of the beach, but, but of the Center of Ponce, of this historic area, many, most of them, are in private hands. Many of those owners don't have much, that is, many resources. They do not have the resources to, to repair, to rebuild, to restore what is the homeland... Built heritage of this... this... this... this city. Huh... hey... We're talking about it being much higher than... that the value of their houses and... and... and... You don't have to walk far to see this... What... hey... that, that is true because we have houses in almost ruins everywhere although this ... What... what we want , we want eh... hey... Conserve this built heritage that... that we have. This... This architecture and I hope that the mechanism of... of... of cooperation between... Between eh... CDBG and the Municipalities is... is... It is transparent. The truth is that it has been good , very difficult to understand and no, I do not see many people compared to the people that I know are affected and own houses in the Center, this, they are not here and... and... for I also understand that, the Municipality, according to this... Trompol González, this... of the Department of... of Development are going to consider some amendments, a bill that, this... It is going to..., perhaps those of the municipality can

e... clarify that, but that, that will give true, this... Some support for the victims of the ... Affected, the owners eh... of, of houses this... history and I hope it is not only for development. But I'm talking about, maybe some discounts on equipment, or maybe exemptions from municipal building fees, maybe this ... hey... al, some this... hey... well, exemptions from, of IVU also for building materials and, well... I hope then, I would like that municipal mechanism that goes to well, eh ... coordinate that with... How will it work? I arrived a little late, maybe they talked about that, but, but what, what municipal office is going to do, that goes to, that is where, where we should behave to, to try to ... of... of... Start this process. This... Well, I wanted because I hope that, that we can, we can, eh ... well... attempt... of... to support the victims who own the... in... in... in the historic houses in downtown Ponce, this... Under this process, because that's what it is, helping the community. And that's what, I mean, CBD is for... For that, to support the, the housing of the community, and that... That's historical class, that's like the heart of... of our community, historically and... And I hope we can coordinate that this -- Since we're at it, you know, this... 2 years, 3 years, of the earthquake and... that is. Walk along Calle Reina, you will see that... As it is advanced the projects of... of... It's still a disaster. So, there are still disasters and... and... and... I hope, I hope we can better coordinate this... At the level of municipality and... and... and the Island. This... and from federal funds for... to help the... To the... to individuals. Thank you.

Ms. Moderator:

Thanks to Mr. Wolf for his expressions. I know that both the programmatic area and CONSUR itself, through its Executive Director, take them and reflect on the dissemination exercises, the orientation exercises for the most affected people. Hey... for that disaster that continues and that's why eh... earthquake

disaster recovery efforts. So I'm sure so, because they are very good ideas, to bring to the table the real ones, right, protagonists of, of these efforts are those victims of the disaster. Hey... Hey... indeed, earlier, Mr Wolf, a whole description was indeed made of this entity, CONSUR, which is going to be working on behalf of the United States. We are not going to answer any questions today, but we want to let you know that this presentation, that description is going to be available on our Youtube channel from December 5th and you are going to be able to see all the public view and maybe eh... that... That space he lost eh... initially.

Not bad. Someone... yes. Yes. Look, Carlos is there collaborating with me today and he is going to make an explanation a little more extensive than the one I did, you see.

Plan. Carlos Olmedo Alvarez:

I have no problem, no problem with mentioning that again... I think we have the time. Hey... In this case, a... hey... It's a... a Consortium. Truth, it is a, a joint between the municipalities, the... the six municipalities that will be working with the remote ter; it is called CONSUR. Let me see if I can turn back the ... Exactly. Hey... this Consortium has ... they eh... are the municipalities, it is the first time that through CDBG-DR Funds in Puerto Rico, municipalities will have the management of a project to rebuild homes in Puerto Rico. Because previously... They have had it but for infrastructure construction projects, they have not... not dealing with people directly. Hey... Right now they don't have an office, that's part of this process that we're doing, it's approving that money, they already signed a contract with us, we're approving that money for them to operate and so on. But they're going to have an office, uh... they're going to have the staff, Mr. Jirau who's in the back is... he will be the Executive Director of the Consortium. So here in the Southern Region, not in San Juan; I dare not say the municipality, but most



likely it will be in Ponce, it will be the offices of CONSUR to attend, true, the cases related to... to... to earthquakes. Hey... They're going to be in coordination... They're going to be the... The front that they are going to attend to the public, then they will be incoordination with the eh... contractors who are going to be in the process of rebuilding and so on, and with us the Department of Housing, like eh... recipient of federal funds directly in the Government. of the Government of Puerto Rico. Hey... Quickly, this was another issue I mentioned during the presentation, maybe I didn't explain it enough. CDBG-DR Funds take a while, because the purpose of CDBG-DR Funds is to cover unmet needs. So we have to finish the process, after FEMA intervenes, after private insurance intervenes, SBA, depending on the case can be Rural or any other federal agency, is tabula, Federal Government tabula, evaluates what were the construction needs, howmuch was the money that was already granted and on that difference additional money is granted. That's why you're never going to see CDBG-DR money coming in after the emergency. CDBG-DR does not deal with emergencies, it deals with medium- and long-term recovery processes; the mechanisms are dealt with by other agencies designed for that purpose; FEMA, uh... Emergency Management, insurance funds, SBA loans, and so on. We, what is CDBG-DR program and MIT enters after all that has been eh... evaluated, awarded the funds and so on, and we cover that difference, is that okay? Therefore, they will see that we are going to enter later, it is not that we want to enter later, it is not that we are slow, it is that we have to wait for that whole process , to be able to say to whom and how it is going to be given money. And in essence, what we covered are things that those other agencies couldn't cover. For the, for whatever reasons, then we come in to cover. Thanks a lot.

Ms. Moderator:

Thanks to planner Carlos Olmedo for that explanation for Mr. Wolf and for the benefit of everyone else. Someone who, there

we have another , another companion who is encouraged. Mrs. Carmen Pacheco, community leader eh... official member of the Committee, of... Citizen Advice of the Department of Housing. Greetings Carmen.

Carmen Pacheco:

Good evening everyone, good afternoon. Well, I was already introduced, right, my name is Carmen Pacheco, I am President of the Association of Community , Recreational and Cultural Development of Clausell and Vice President of the Alliance of Community Leaders of Puerto Rico. It's the worry, the famous "Rs," and we know, Those of us who work with community that the word relocation to many of our communities keeps us up at night. For different... For different situations that we will not be touching but, we know the experience. I understand that at the time of the relocation, especially the coast that suffered too much with the earthquakes, be that of Ponce, to the beach of Ponce, be it Guayanilla, Peñuelas, Lajas, because the cantazo, as the ... The effect of impacts from the... How is it, the subsidence and collapse of the land, we have many problems on the beaches, on the coasts, and I understand that, uh... that the Consortium must be, just like you, that when we talk about relocation, and if they are sectors like the ones I am talking about, which is the coast, that it is communities that have been where they are for more than a hundred years, that it takes ... It is taken into account that if as a block, which we say as a block, we are not going to destroy a community, we are not going to relocate, we are not going to des... to dismember and really, do not invent the vouchers again, because, you know, with Maria I have 58 vouchers in my community and nobody can buy, you know that we have nothing and that with earthquakes it will not happen again. That we really are a little more planners for the relocation, right, of those people and those families. We know that we do not have so much, but if we can manage to unite, like you , they say mitigation with what we have so that the

families that are affected do not really dismember that community. That is the treasure of our people. And it is our concern. And with that truth is one of the most ... that worry us more because we have lived it in courts and we have endangered it even in the courts, reaching the Supreme. Is that okay? Have a good afternoon.

Ms. Moderator:

Thanks Carmon for your... your contribution and your expressions, your experience that is always important in these processes. Very well, because someone else who is going to... to make an expression, use this space to contribute. Well, Mr. Carlos Jirau.

Licensee Carlos Jirau:

Good evening everyone, huh... welcome to Ponce. We want to thank you because of the view. Just to indicate, we will be presenting a written paper later, but we want to invite those who are here present, and to carry the message eh... we have maintained direct communication with the Department of Housing, as Mr. Olmedo said, we have managed to add additional views in the municipalities. We want to increase participation as much as possible, that's why there are public hearings in Guayanilla, Lajas and Guánica, and if we have to add additional elements, we will add them. But it is important that they participate and we want to take the message to the communities, to the community leadership, to participate, approaches like that of Mrs. Carmen Pacheco, approaches here as the comrades. This is what the plan has to really nurture, the plan cannot be a document that has no life, that is a document that... What... that has some ideas and that's it, but we have to bring it to the needs. CONSUR was created for this purpose, each of the six towns that make up the Consortium have some particularities. There are municipalities that need to address the issue of relocation; hey... Guayanilla for example has

some impacted areas in the coastal zone that must be relocated, but we must work with those communities in coordination. Ponce has some particularityis where multi-story buildings were affected, where families are now paying mortgages eh... And they are renting a second house, how are we going to help them, but still preserving the architectural value, it is, that it is important that you feel calm, when you start discussing this, that although we have until the December 4 , we will be evaluating the request for an extension of time to be able to ask HUD for an extension of time that would allow us to present additional ideas. It is important that the *action plan* in this part collects our ideas, our projects, ok? Let's not stop raising ideas, let's not stop to propose projects; it will be up to us to discuss them with the Department of Housing. Hey... CONSUR's idea of having a structure closer to the citizens of each of the six municipalities to help them process applications, to help them channel their housing needs . At this stage we will be working with the "Rs", true, as we mentioned, in terms of repair and reconstruction, but we are very aware that there is a need for a housing inventory that must be brought to the southern area; It is worthless that we have a *voucher* to buy if there are no houses to buy. And each village in this area has that particularity. So we are working, in communication with the six mayors, how we are going to be able to promote the development of housing eh... I know that you are pro here and you are in contact with people who can propose investment, development, I invite you to that, to feel confident at the time to sit down with us, to propose new projects, new initiatives. Four houses here, five there, ten apartments hereand there, we began to meet the need for housing. You know that it is very important that we leave here today with an idea, that we know that we have more than a week to submit written comments , but that there is going to be an additional process to be able to submit those comments and that you spread the word so that people participate. Although we are in Ponce today, if you want to go on the 14th to

Guánica or... or... or... the other is Lajas, feel in confidence, all for a single process. It doesn't matter where you go, not because you go there, they're not going to let you speak here. The important thing is that within this process that begins today, until the 14th, we manage to bring our ideas, our projects so that we can have tools to dialogue with the Department of Housing and be able to promote the development of housing throughout the sector. Again, we're talking about reconstruction, rehabilitation, but we know we have to build new housing. Yes, I invite you to serve as spokespersons, that this is as a first step. It is important that know, that from January you will see the process of... of contact with the communities. Once the plan is running, we are going to hold meetings in the communities, we are going to start ... to bring ideas, we are going to give participation to be able to achieve, as Mrs. Pacheco says, that... that communities feel part of the process, but not merely in cosmetic terms, but that they are really part of the decision-making process and that if we had to talk about relocations at a time, it is done in coordination with those communities so as not to affect the social fiber, really, of those communities. So I invite you to be spokespeople, carry the message we want participation, which is important that we participate now, it is a lot of money, but at the same time, it is not a lot of money; it is a lot of money to start sowing a seed, to start promoting housing, but we have to start building as soon as possible because as you have mentioned one of the deponents, too much time has passed and the needs are there. So the big challenge, that in 2023 we can put this to run, that the communities are part of the process and that we achieve with housing to enter all these activities so that, in due course, we can develop housing projects for the six towns of the southern area. Thank you very much.

Ms. Moderator:

Thanks to Mr. Carlos Jirau. We take that sense of

urgency, we take that... That responsibility, truth, of... that we take today all of us who are here, to continue inviting our communities, community leaders, uh... interested persons to participate in the next four public hearings, in addition to submitting written submissions and comments. Hey... And we take away the importance of looking for that housing inventory. I have to thank Carlos Olmedo for that presentation and for the additional explanations he has given us this afternoon. Also, thank you to all the speakers who have carried that they have ... contributed and have made their expressions during the hearing. We concluded this public hearing process and... of the First Amendment Substance to the Action Plan for Recovery in Response to the 2019-2020 Earthquakes and Storm Isaias 2020 of the CDBG-DR Funds of the Puerto Rico Department of Housing. Thanking you all, right, for your valuable contributions and we inform you that, true, we remind you that tomorrow we will be in the Legislature of Yauco. Hey... in the Legislature of Yauco we are waiting for you all. In addition to watering the voice so that eh... can too, uh... make their contribution and their pressures. Thank you all very much . We finish the work at 5:36 in the afternoon. Thank you so much.

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THE PUBLIC HEARING WAS CLOSED

\* \* \*

TRANSCRIBER CERTIFICATION

I CERTIFY that the foregoing is the faithful and correct transcription of the record taken by the undersigned of the testimony given and of the procedures that took place during this deposition.

In San Juan, Puerto Rico, February 9, 2023.

Jeancarlos Laracuente Rodriguez

Executive Secretary or Transcriber of the  
Public Reference Hearing Division of  
Public and Community Affairs  
CDBG-DR/MIT Programs  
Department of Housing

DEPARTMENT OF THE HOUSING  
CDBG-DR PROGRAM  
SAINT JUAN, PORT RICH

RE:

FIRST AMENDMENT (SUBSTANTIAL) \*  
OF THE PLAN OF ACTION FOR THE \*  
RECOVERY IN ANSWER TO \* THE  
EARTHQUAKES AND THE STORM \*  
ISAIAH OF THE MONEY CDBG-DR \*

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VIEW PUBLIC

DATE : November 29, 2022  
TIME : 10:45 A.M  
CLIENT : DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING CDBG-DR PROGRAM  
ADDRESS : 606 Avenue Barbosa, Floor 8  
Saint Juan, Port Rich  
HELD EN : Municipal Legislature,  
Yauco, Puerto Rico

PARTIES

MODERATOR:

Mrs. Maricarmen Figueroa Correa

PRESIDENTIAL TABLE:

Mrs. Laura Rivera Carrion	- Coordination Officer for Disaster recovery
Ms. Marivette Cabeza Díaz	- Disaster Recovery Associate Deputy Chief CDBG-DR Program
Mr. Carlos Olmedo Alvarez	- Planner and Secretary Assistant of Planning Mr.
Angel Luis Torres	- Mayor of Guayanilla
Mr. Alexis Rivera	- Representative Ponce District
Mr. Iran Vega Pérez	- Representative District Ponce



SHORTENER: Ms. Tiffany J Carrasquillo Rodríguez

OTHER PARTY:

1. Ruth Rosario - Resident of Guayanilla
2. Lidia Torres - Resident of Yauco
3. Miriam Vargas - Resident of Yauco

The procedures HE they took to cape according to arise of the following transcription.

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Hello, we are all set and ready to begin this public hearing. Good morning everyone and welcome to this first public hearing. Well, I must say the second public hearing, we already had our first public hearing in the municipality of Ponce. So this is our second public hearing of the first substantial amendment to the action plan for recovery in response to the 2019-2020 earthquakes and tropical storm Isaiás 2020, from CDBG-DR funds from the Puerto Rico Department of Housing that attends to the needs of the affected residents of the Municipalities of Guánica, Guayanilla, Lajas, Mayagüez, Peñuelas, Ponce and finally Yauco that we are in today's morning.

My name is Lcda. Maria del Carmen Figueroa, Assistant Secretary of the Federal Compliance and Subrecipient Management area and today, Tuesday, November 29, 2022, at 10:45 in the morning, I will serve as your moderator from the Yauco municipal legislature and we thank the municipality de Yauco for hosting this morning for being committed to this recovery effort after the earthquakes.

We notify everyone that we have the assistance of an English language translator and a sign language interpreter, for the benefit of the community that needs it. If someone needs it, please indicate it to also make the translation system available as well as make the sign language partner more visible.

We have some special guests as we do not naturally have our host, the Mayor of Yauco, the Hon. Angel Luis Torres, here with us, thank you Mayor and all your team, we acknowledge the presence of Mrs. Laura Rivera Carrión who is Disaster Recovery Coordination Officer for the Caribbean of the Department of Federal Housing , Laura is here with us, thank you Laura for that support always, Marivette Cabeza Díaz , who is Associate Secretary for Disaster Recovery, Division of Public and Community Affairs of the Department of Housing , is here with us too , the Planner Carlos Olmedo Álvarez who will address you in a few minutes Assistant Secretary of the Planning Program, we also have Messrs. Alexis Rivera and Irán Vega Perez representing Senator Ramon Luis Rivera district of Ponce thank you for being here and at Atty. Nelson Luis Santiago Serrano Legal Adviser to Senator Maria Liss González of the District of Ponce and Vice President of the Senate of Puerto Rico.

Very well, so now I am going to let you know some important information about this public hearing and how we truthfully disseminate this call. The Department of Housing convened this public hearing for today, Tuesday, November 29, 2022, with the purpose of hearing comments and/or proposals from the affected residents of the affected municipalities Guánica, Guayanilla, Lajas,

Mayagüez, Peñuelas, Ponce and Yauco, as well as the general public. This hearing is part of the federal requirement and citizen participation process to receive comments on this first amendment to this action plan.

This includes unmet needs in the aftermath of Tropical Storm Isaiás, a new needs assessment for the use of the mitigation fund reserve, and data on public outreach efforts and stakeholder engagement following the release of the action plan. original. The original action plan remains available to the general public on our website, [www.cdbg-dr.pr.gov](http://www.cdbg-dr.pr.gov) . On November 18, 2022 , the notice of public hearing was published in the New Day Newspaper, on page forty-five (45) required by the regulations.

We notify you that this public hearing is being recorded and will subsequently be published on or before December 5 on our YouTube channel. The public comment acceptance period for this amendment has been available since November 4 and runs until December 4. You can visit our website, [cdbg-dr.pr.gov](http://cdbg-dr.pr.gov) to read the first amendment and submit your comments through the online form or by email, [infocdbg@vivienda.pr.gov](mailto:infocdbg@vivienda.pr.gov) . You can also send it by regular or postal mail to PO BOX 21365, San Juan, Puerto Rico 00928-1365.

So we are going to mention the rules for the effective use of this public view. He must have seen himself registered at the entrance to testify and/or to express his interest during the hearing. We already have several deponents registered. Shifts will be awarded on a first-come, first-served basis. A turn of five minutes will be granted to each deponent.

This turn is non-transferable to any deponent... to another deponent, I must say. Before deposing, you must identify yourself for registration purposes. Please indicate your name, town of origin and/or entity to which belongs. The presentation must be on related topics to the first substantial amendment to the action plan for recovery in response to earthquakes 2019, 2020 and Tropical Storm Isaiás 2020, from the CDBG-DR Funds.

Each deponent must respect the turns of the others and maintain silence during the public hearing. He moderator will tell you when it is your turn and all the people who are participating in this view must promote an atmosphere of respect, as we know that's how it's going to be. Very good. At this time we are going to give planner Carlos Olmedo the opportunity to fill us in on this first substantial amendment to the action plan for recovery in response to the 2019-2020 earthquakes and storm

tropical Isaiás 2020 from the CDBG-DR funds of the Puerto Rico Department of Housing in this way you can learn more about the program and issue your comments that we will be listening to this afternoon and that we can still submit until December 4. Without further ado I leave you then with the Planner Carlos Olmedo.

Planner Carlos Olmedo:

Good day. They already caught my attention yesterday, for the translators, so if you don't understand something I want to explain this eh... some aspects are complicated I want to explain as simple as possible, if they don't understand something they make a face and I'll come back and explain.

We are here as part of the public hearing process of what is the first amendment to the action plan of the earthquake fund. They will see later that in addition to the earthquake there is another program for Mayagüez. to discuss, most of the funds are for a program to rebuild homes, reconstruction, repair and now relocation of homes that were affected by seismic events.

You know better than anyone that in 2019 a series of events began, today we had one, they have not ended, but the biggest ones were during those Christmases of 2019-2020. As a result of these events on January 6, 2021, a *federal Register is published* , which is this document that HUD sends to all jurisdictions and in this case it establishes where or which jurisdiction they will receive funds, different types of money. In this case they were DR funds, Disaster Recovery and in the case of Puerto Rico we received 36,000,000 dollars for residential recovery projects in homes that were affected by seismic events.

I am going to explain, this is not a *slide* of this presentation I was looking for the one that I had and I did not find it this is the one from FEMA, but this is a question that arose yesterday and I want to then I will incorporate it and for the next views I am going to look for the one we have prepared in Spanish.

It is important to understand CDBG-DR funds are funds that are there to meet unmet or unmet needs, as Maria del Carmen mentioned, they are essentially after an emergency event between FEMA, the federal emergency agency, obviously Puerto Rico emergency management, COR3, other additional funds come in including loans from SBF. After those agencies and those funds meet those needs, the requests are received, they are evaluated and money is granted for repairs and others, the analysis of the total need that there was versus the money that was given on that, an analysis is made of that difference and In some cases, like this one, the federal government allocates additional funds through HUD to cover those unmet needs, mainly in the area of housing and economic development, and that is what CDBG-DR is. The event occurs between the emergency management agencies and we are entering this process when the emergency is ending and the process begins in the medium and long term, which is the disaster management and recovery process.

Many people tell us, the 2019-2020 events, the funds are approved in 2021, the 2022 action plan is being approved, if the process is designed that way because it feeds on all the information provided by those other agencies about what happened in the funds that were granted, the projects that were approved and what is not covered, what is an unmet need and starting from this point, the first action plan is approved on January 5, 2022. The action plan that established how funds were going to be distributed to four municipalities that were the municipalities that had been identified by the Federal Register by the document that mentioned to the

federal government the areas of greatest impact.

These were the four municipalities Guánica, Yauco, Guayanilla and Ponce. The federal registry established that 80% of the funds should be distributed among these four municipalities. The different analyzes of which municipality received damage are made with the information that was available at that time and a distribution was made that was brought to public view and the action plan that we have today was approved.

What's up with that? That this year is approved, a new *Federal Register is published* and more money is granted to Puerto Rico 184,000,000 we can see it as the effects of the events continued to be received and the federal government realized that there was a greater need than it had been granted or covered with other funds and due to this an additional 184,000,000 are granted, within these 184,000,000 there is an item for the municipality of Mayagüez to deal with some floods.

This causes an amendment to the action plan to be made, which is this amendment that we are discussing, so we are making an amendment to include the use of this money and some changes to the original action plan that have been discussed with the municipalities. That action plan, those 184,000,000, allows us to work with the four original municipalities, including Lajas and Peñuelas and Mayagüez, because there is a specific allocation for the municipality of Mayagüez due to the event of tropical storm Isaiás. So, we have 36,000,000 originals of the action plan that is approved, 184,000,000 new ones that we are working on now for a

total of 221,000,000 that is what we are going to be discussing in this action plan.

The vast majority to attend to the repair, reconstruction and relocation of properties that were affected by the earthquakes. This, you are going to see me talking about CONSUR, it is this organization among the six municipalities that are going to be working with the home repair program, uh, after the earthquakes, it is a consortium of the six municipalities and it is the first consortium that CDBG-DR works this way.

To date, the municipalities had received money and there were and are working directly with funds for construction projects that are road infrastructure projects, uh, square, bridge and so on, the municipalities are doing it, but no municipality to date Up until three months ago when we signed the contract, they have been working on projects to care for homes, it is already a direct relationship with people.

These six municipalities signed an agreement with Vivienda, created the consortium of the south and are going to be managing these projects for the repair, reconstruction and relocation of residential properties. So, CONSUR is going to manage this program, and I'm going to talk a little about the program. CONSUR is going to be the entity that is going to be attending, receiving, uh, the applicant's information from the people affected, managing that information with us and the companies that are going to be in the contrition process.

In the case of R3, it is Housing that does it directly with



those who know how R3 works, it is the Department of Housing that does it with its contractors. In this case, the municipality will deal with the situation and inform us and the contractors, all management falls to CONSUR.

We have the six municipalities, we have CONSUR. I am going to explain all this now the municipality of Mayagüez and I will explain these two little things later. The first allocation is the funds as they were granted in the first action plan without Lajas and Peñuelas without these two. Here they are how they were granted in the first action plan, which were the 36,000,000. What happen? We are presenting in this first amendment the inclusion of these 1.7 million to both municipalities because since both municipalities are going to participate in the home reconstruction program that I mentioned with CONSUR, we wanted them to start from the beginning and we did not want the four municipalities that already had funds allocated that the tasks could begin and that these two municipalities began the tasks later.

So this was reorganized a bit, 1.7 million were obtained for each of the municipalities so that all the municipalities can begin to carry out their processes in fact, and we, the Department of Housing and the mayors, have already made some progress in these areas. This fund is also created, which is so that CONSUR can manage itself, since it is a different organization from the municipalities, it belongs to the municipalities, but it is different from the municipalities, it has to pay its employee, it has to buy its equipment, rent an office And all that, then, will

come out of this fund. And this is an administrative fund, this is a percentage, which in this case is 5. % here is a 5% that is applied to all the programs that we have, which is what salaries are paid with, all this administrative process that makes the Department of Housing.

From the second allocation, which is the 184,000,000, then, a distribution similar to the original distribution is made, a distribution based on the main reports from FEMA, COR3, which are the damage reports received from each municipality. The amount of damage suffered by the municipalities is evaluated, the need that FEMA identifies, how much FEMA provided in assistance and others and other agencies and there is then what is the need not covered for each municipality and the percentage is applied. . And this is the total for all of both assignments this is the total.

In the case of Mayagüez, it was not included in the first allocation, the first allocation was exclusively to address the situation of the earthquakes, but in the second there are separate funds that HUD tells us we want to address this situation with Mayagüez. Based on the similar percentage that I mentioned, Mayagüez is assigned 7,000,000 to deal with those floods caused by the storm Isaiás.

In the case of mitigation, this is money that will be used for mitigation projects. Eh..., eh... in the properties, communities related to the earthquakes and here we have the total.

Ok, the program that was originally SR2 and now changes to R3 because originally the current action plan did not include the

relocation part, uh now if the relocation part is being included, that is one of the main changes. What you are looking for is, uh... to serve these properties in these six municipalities that need to be repaired, rebuilt or relocated.

Eh..., eh... the distribution is through the sub- recipients and in this case what CONSUR mentioned to you right now is the entity that is in charge of going to the communities, it will go with us, but it is who is going to go to the communities. to give him the promotion, he is going to explain to people what the entire advertising process is, help people to apply, they are going to have officials here in the municipalities that are going to help people fill out the applications, handle those applications with the contractors who are going to do the evaluations, go to the houses, the inspections, the engineers, all that. It will be handled that way. Now CONSUR, the Department of Housing signed an agreement with us, that's it.

The maximum allocations for what is a rehabilitation of a house is 60,000 dollars this is a house that needs repairs, what is reconstruction of a house that needs to be built, to rebuild a session of the property is 185,000 dollars maximum including the demolition of the affected area the affected area is demolished and reconstructed again and 265,000 dollars for projects that require, uh, reconstruction with elevation with better elevation and that also includes demolition. Important this project is for homes, it does not address the industrial sector, the commercial sector, everything is for homeowners.

This is our Department of Housing Internet page, if you want to

see the action plan or another document , access the page, this same image or banner will appear, you press get here, if not under the action plan you press and The earthquake is going to come out, you hit it and you get here, you press this button that says see action plan and you will download the action plan in PDF and if you want to submit any comments, click here and the window will appear so that you can fill out information. If you want to see it in Spanish, it is in Spanish, if you want to see it in English, press this button and the page changes completely, the same page changes to English and vice versa if you want it in Spanish.

Originally it was two public hearings, if you saw the newspaper ad a couple of weeks ago there were two public hearings last week in a meeting with the mayors they asked us to hold three more public hearings there is no problem the letter to HUD has already been submitted and is being handled to request the extension of time.

These are this was the public hearing that we held yesterday in the municipality of Ponce, this is today's public hearing, the ones we would have left would be these three. On December 9 at 10:00 in the morning at the Barrio Playa Community Center in Guayanilla and on December 14 we have two one at 10:00 in the morning at the Club Puertorriqueño in Guánica and the other at 4 :00 in the afternoon at the Cultural Center of Lajas. You can participate in any of it, it doesn't matter if you are from one municipality or another, it doesn't matter if you came to this one or went to the one in Ponce, you can participate in all of them or the one you prefer, there is no problem with that, even if you don't like to participate you can

fill out the web page that I mentioned, here it comes here and submit your comment, submit your comment. All these comments, if they are addressed and answered in writing, if they are questions or concerns or others, a comment is made and the written response is published. You can invite people from your community who perhaps couldn't come today, well, come to these others.

Now, if you have any comments, you can drop by for five minutes. Maria del Carmen, will explain a little more a pleasure.

MRS. MODERATOR

Thank you very much Carlos, for that explanation of what the first amendment to this action plan is about and what the recovery efforts after the 2019-2020 earthquakes are about. Now we are going to have the space to listen to a presentation by those citizens who have expressed their interest in sharing and contributing their experiences, their ideas and their suggestions for this recovery effort. In the first place we are going to have Mrs. Ruth Rosario, forgive me. Before listening to Mrs. Ruth Rosario, we are certainly going to listen to the Hon. Angel Luis Torres, mayor of Yauco who has also asked for a space to express himself.

MAYOR ANGEL LUIS TORRES:

Good morning to all of you, and especially to the entire component of the Department of Housing who are here with us at this public hearing of the action plan to amend it and to be able to all of us present here notify the Department of Housing what our needs are. Why do we want a specific amendment to be made to it because this is of benefit to our entire city of Yauco, our entire region,

and very especially to the compañeros and compañeras who are going to be deposing with me today the members of the community leaders , civic leaders, sports leaders, cultural leaders who are here this morning. Your participation is very important, it is very important that you can contribute ideas to this action plan because not only the municipal government as a government entity that is discharging our responsibility, but you have much more knowledge than even ourselves about the needs of the communities. what has been happening in each one of them during all these catastrophic events that our city has felt both as earthquakes and hurricanes. I would like to start this morning with what we are going to be presenting to the Department of Housing.

As you can see, we have established this morning to be able to make a presentation of what the impact of the earthquake has been in our city of Yauco. As you know very well today in our city we still have family who are receiving in a wooden module who do not have a place to live as a municipality at that time we set about the task together with our infrastructure department, together with a geologist from the Department of Natural Resources and together with engineers who carried out soil studies in several communities of Yauco, for example in the Ciénega community of Barrio Barinas.

Where thirteen families were determined through this geological study that they cannot build their homes again, well, this action plan, as you very well mention, comes to help relocate those families and build new homes on more stable land and that they can live safely in it, I would also like to be mentioned and thank the

Secretary of Housing, William Rodríguez, who has been very proactive with us in this community. In two fundamental aspects, in the first instance, he made us a transfer of land in the area of Monte Verde, Toa Alta to be able to build and relocate these families before these Federal Housing funds begin, for example, today afternoon we will be signing a fund transfer of almost 4,000,000 dollars to relocate the 35 families both in the Ciénega Sector and two neighboring communities and that we can finally be able to relocate these families and live in a safe roof.

Thanks to this allocation from the state emergency fund, through the fiscal oversight board, so this battle that the community, organizations, our municipality waged was heard by the secretary of housing and today afternoon we will be signing so very grateful to the Secretary of Housing for this great achievement for this community that needs it so much.

We prepared the geological studies that you will see below in various communities including the Cienega community , we were also doing a soil study in all the communities surrounding the Susua ravine , true at that time as you know in the Altura del Cafetal Urbanization , Villa del Cafetal Urbanization, Vereda Urbanization and the entire coastline of the Susua ravine . The places where the most impacts were received were both the Barinas neighborhoods and the Susua Alta neighborhoods, Susua Baja, the three most populated neighborhoods of Yauco, where the most damage occurred. Over 800 homes in Yauco were inspected, of which at that time almost 367 had been determined to be in red with damages of around 200

housing units were inspected and ended up in yellow, which means minor damage to the homes and the rest of all The universe of Yauco was satisfactorily inspected with what we call the green color to satisfy the need of the residents at that time that all the places and all the houses in our city of Yauco had been inspected.

After that we got down to work and began to demolish the structures in Yauco according to the PP-DR program that established it, being the only municipality of the six most affected municipalities that now in the month of December we are going to complete the process 100% demolition with 87 housing units completely demolished.

Which means that if we achieve this action plan, those 87 families would have the right to request that a new home be built in those 87 spaces that were demolished. So, this is the importance of this action plan and the importance of being the first municipality to have completed the demolition process now in the month of December if God allows it, culminating in the process of 87 demolished housing units.

In addition to this, we did not sit idly by when the incoming government entered as manager and sole mayor, right, of the municipalities most affected by the earthquakes that had been re-elected, I took on the task of leading the incoming mayors of the other five municipalities and I proposed the idea of CONSUR we went to Washington where the Resident Commissioner, we went to the Department of Federal Housing also under the leadership of William Rodríguez , very proactive allowed us to achieve CONSUR.



As you can see, the ordinance between the six municipalities allowed it and that we could have this CONSUR program, as they explained in the action plan, it will allow us to maximize resources to be able to help more families in the six municipalities, right, as they very well establish they have their federal contribution guidelines for what is a relocation, what is a rebuild or a repair.

They have limits that set a maximum quantity, we are convinced that through CONSUR, managing itself in the south with a contractor from all these areas, the costs can be lowered and we can help more people, which is something that we always agreed should be carried out in the Housing Department. As you know, this idea arose and was born, although the R3 program is a highly effective program that has come to help many families after María.

We understood that the process was a bit rushed, right, between the funds being transferred to Puerto Rico at the federal level and when the program began and that the high cost, well, was going to cause many people to find out about that aid from María That is why it was the idea of CONSUR and that it can be achieved at this time through our municipalities to assist them with these funds allocated from this action plan.

Also, as you can see, during our visit to Washington, we talked about a disbursement of the budget, as you can see part of what the planner of the Department of Housing established in his previous presentation to mine, we are very close to the amount that this proposal by the Department of Housing to assign Yauco, as you can see, from that moment we established the importance of a relocation

project for 60 families, of which we are already going to have 4,000,000 assigned from the Department of families at this time, at that time we had proposed 9,000,000 to relocate 60 families with the Housing Department's allocation now of 4.5 we are going to be relocating 35.

So the discovered part would go to the proposed action plan and we would be within the budgeted term of our municipality, we did an exhaustive analysis having all the data of the houses inspected, of the houses demolished in our city of Yauco that the total number of families that would require assisting improvements to your home must be around 300 families in our city of Yauco who may benefit from the repair, reconstruction or relocation of families.

From this action plan we had determined a base budget of 9,500,000 of the total that can be assigned by the Department and, for example, we had established 10% from FEMA for earthquake projects for the projects that FEMA has in our municipality, which is something that we are going to request that it be established within the percentage established for each municipality that we be allowed to use 10% of the total funds allocated to Yauco to cover and satisfy 100% of the funds of the strategic projects that are going to be carried out with FEMA specifically.

The problem of mitigation of the 9,000,000 we already saw that Housing puts it aside, right, as an allocation of 15% of the total of the two hundred and twenty -two million, so we are satisfied with this that the mitigation project is carried out in our city having land already identified using CONSUR, therefore, the 15% established

by the Housing Department of our city can be used. Something that, as you can see, we propose the allocation of a *City Revitalization program* as it currently exists in the Department of Housing for María, it can be done due to an earthquake in the case of Yauco, perhaps differently from cities like Guánica, Guayanilla that even their relocation situations have not been satisfied.

We understand that they are going to use a large part or all of the funds to rehabilitate housing in the case of Yauco, having the 4.5 allocation to relocate families, we are convinced that there is a pressing need to be allowed to use the allocated funds to create our own City Revitalization program due to earthquake that we are now going to explain why it is necessary, because as a municipality we have done it through the action plan that you have very well submitted to us that we have been analyzing, I will allow you to publish it in the action plan from the information that the Department of Housing provides us, we already had a possible, true, allocation of funds by municipality, we agree with the form and manner that it has been distributed following the parameters of the Department of Housing and the also established percentages of the economic and social index of our city, well, we agree, true d, in the distribution that has been made among the six municipalities.

In addition to this, they will be able to see specific data through this action plan where it also establishes the poverty index, where it also establishes the percentages in each of the municipalities, as you can see in the case of Yauco, which you can see we are in an environment much more favorable than in 2016,

right, in 2016 by now the poverty margin, right, or the poverty rate in our city was around 60%, it has been drastically reduced to almost 43.49%, a difference very close to percentage of the country in general of 43%, which is the level of poverty in our city of Yauco.

Apart from this, we also established that, as you can see, what has been a feasibility study, we submitted a feasibility study through the City Revitalization program by María to be able to support the strategic projects that we want to do in our urban area in order to do so. to do, we have been able to see that there is an additional 30% that the population of our city is adult, true, both in our municipality and in the area the population that predominates is a population of more than 65 years being the region with the highest rate of adults in all of Puerto Rico, Guánica is the first, followed by Sabana Grande and then both Guayanilla and Yauco in all of Puerto Rico as the municipalities with the highest population.

In terms of unemployment, which is one of the things that has been highly productive in our city. We have seen how we have dropped to a record figure of 9.9% unemployment in our city of Yauco compared to the deposition of 2016 that we are almost at 20% unemployment, which is very positive, the positive environment that has occurred in our city and also what is the average income per capita that increased drastically in our city of Yauco. One of the things that you will also be able to see in the study that we did, apart from the percentages of unemployment, is the number of establishments that have been created from 2016 up to the moment of

282 establishments. Today we have over 400 new establishments in our city of Yauco and the percentages that have lethal trade economic activity with 25.3% health care and accommodation in our city of Yauco as well as in the hand invoice.

This proposal that we are showing today in this plan will support the need to correlate housing improvements with having infrastructure and economic development projects in our urban area because it was highly devastated after the earthquakes and many of the buildings that The surrounding area was greatly affected and we understand that it is urgent that we can be allowed to use funds from the action plan to be used for an earthquake City Revitalization.

The next project will see many of the projects that we are already managing through María, but many of them will remain unfinished, right, part of the feasibility study that we have done where we have concentrated on the construction of octals As for rehabilitating abandoned buildings for shops, museums, parking lots, well, it will allow us to have greater economic activity in our urban area, which has been one of our greatest economic strengths, as is the case with the town hall, which is not in use due to earthquakes, the case of the building with the twelve doors, the case of the old cinema that we want to turn into a cinema that is part of the feasibility study to have economic activity, the old bank that was demolished that we want to generate another economic activity , the old Torre Lebrón printing press, what is all our traditional coffee walk, the shops that we are going to fix by María

and can also be fixed by r earthquake. What the money did not give and does not satisfy María's assignment, well, a general comprehensive plan of the urban area can be made and we can have it.

The Government Center, which received severe damage from earthquakes, we are in negotiations with Public Buildings to acquire them and make a private health center to continue paying in terms of economic development and health. Being able to complete the intercalation of the connections that we have from urban parks for the enjoyment of families are part of the projects that we have later, we will be talking about that.

That is why today we want to mention that Yauco can also have access to funds for a City Revitalization program to complete a strategic plan for economic development in our urban area, which is one of the the things that have been done the most in the country to be able to compete with the shopping centers that have come to the detriment of urban centers and will continue to contribute to job creation, as we can support with the study we have carried out for the Department of Housing as well Apart from our city of Yauco, we are very grateful for the opportunity to be here with us. We are very happy with the participation that has taken place this morning and with the next deponents.

So we are ready to get to work to be able to implement these funds and that they reach people in need directly through CONSUR and that we can continue developing our urban area in the sustained way that we have and be able to improve social, economic conditions. in our city of Yauco so thank you all very much for this opportunity

and that you can then accept our request in the amendment to the action plan.

MRS: MODERATOR

Thank you very much to the mayor, for that explanation, that information that he provides to colleagues who are meeting here today to better understand these efforts, both state and municipal and regional, that are taking place for the benefit of this recovery after the 2019-2020 earthquakes. . Now if we are going to receive Mrs. Ruth Rosario who is a resident of the municipality of Yauco who wants, right, I request a space to express herself. Go ahead, Mrs. Ruth, come here.

MRS. RUTH ROSARIO

I'm from Guanica

MRS. MODERATOR

Doña Ruth is from Guánica, nothing against the municipality of Yauco, but to clarify that she is from Guánica

MRS. RUTH ROSARIO

I am Yaucana , but I live in Guánica. I was born and raised in Yauco, but I necessarily got married and went to live in Guánica.

MRS. MODERATOR

Those things happen Mrs. Ruth.

MRS. RUTH ROSARIO

Nothing, good morning. I am here thanks to you, plus Mr. Carlos Olmedo, who sent me an email to be here because I am one of those affected by the earthquakes in Guánica, if I "did " a little, forgive me, it was not easy to go through, especially with my

husband. being sick, I was inside the house when what happened happened, my house was a total loss. When they went to inspect it, they told me that I couldn't be there because one more earthquake collapsed the residence, my husband with a cancellation 8 months ago died, he passed away. Right now, as they say, I'm on the street, I don't have a home, I'm living in a house heir to my husband's side and I've always been attentive to the pages, asking and thanks to the programs and the help that there has been, I'm here and I hope that So, with all the programs that exist, it can qualify at least for me because my husband is no longer with me.

Nothing, it is not easy a sacrifice for many years and a couple of seconds to lose a house and be on the street, but right now I am not on the street because I am living in my husband's house, my husband's parents who died and He is an heir, but really, if they say you have to go at times, I have nowhere to go. I hope that with this help and that they go, investigate that I at least, even if it's a little house with a little room to spend the last thing I have left until God says daddy. Many thanks for everything.

MRS. MODERATOR

Mrs. Ruth, we thank you for being here with us. These opportunities give us precisely the alternative of knowing those faces behind the disaster. It is not a house, it is not something material, but it is a whole story that has been happening and I thank you for your courage in expressing your need for all of us to take notes that, in addition to There must be hundreds of cases in your case and that is why the effort has to move after the



earthquakes, so I am grateful that you have made space to come and express yourself.

Mrs. Lidia Torres Did Mrs. Lidia leave me? Doña Lidia, come over there. Mrs. Lidia, are you also from Yauco or did you also get married and how was it?

Mrs. Lidia Torres

This program, according to what I saw, I hope it helps many people who are here, because the earthquakes, well, today there was a shock as we say and also listen to the lady, I hope that with this program we can help all the citizens of Yauco all the towns where the earthquakes occurred. Yeah, because I get nervous and thanks for everything.

MRS. MODERATOR

Thank you, Mrs. Lidia, and we thank you for coming to find out, to listen, to be a part of, and to be available for, this recovery effort. Undoubtedly this morning the entire housing team was here, also here and we felt the shock, we also experienced it this morning so without a doubt we are concerned and concerned about this situation that also continues to happen every day.

I want to invite any other person who is interested in expressing themselves at this time, even if they have not previously informed you, at this time the microphone is yours, this activity is for you. Representative of the senator here, thank you.

IRÁN VEGA PÉREZ REPRESENTATIVE :

My name is Irán Vega Pérez and I want to speak for a double purpose, firstly, to thank the name of the senator and the

Department of Housing for taking the message to each of the towns that were affected by the earthquakes and hurricanes in recent years we've had

On the other hand, express that perhaps it is a concern that people affected by earthquakes and hurricanes may have. I was watching the excellent presentation that the mayor gave us a few minutes ago, we really liked it. We see the sense of love and belonging that the mayor has towards the municipality of Yauco, but on the other hand the concern that we bring and worries us through the visits that we have made with our district senator from Ponce Ramoncito Ruiz Nieves, to the areas Affected have been that the residents, having the need, have found it difficult to manage help towards the need they have. I am completely sure that the people who are here understand what I am saying.

We were listening to two citizens of Yaucano , one of them residents of Guánica and if I ask them, what is the management and where is it? She does not know, she knows that they are going to help her, but they do not know how to channel, number two is the great concern and I am going to see it from the point of view of this server if it had happened to me that it did not happen to me thank God.

I retired several years ago all my efforts and sacrifices from my years of work I deposited them in my home, I have no savings and I put everything in my home I made the home of my dreams for myself and my family, I invested all the money that may have accumulated in my years of effort and sacrifice. If what happened with the

earthquakes and hurricanes had happened to me, the total investment in my home, the Department of Housing goes, the municipal and state agencies visit my home and tell me your home has to be demolished, there is no other way. I invested 130,000 in my house plus the cost of the house, the question I ask myself, how is the housing department going to execute the help that I am going to receive, will it be through the effort of my 30 years of sacrifice or will it be a bonus Or will they build me a house that does not meet my life expectancy? If I had 30 years of sacrifice, the Department of Housing is going to celebrate my 30 years of sacrifice or they are going to tell me that you are going to have a two-room house like this. This is what you have.

The experience that we have lived and I am going to tell you with all my heart, we have visited with the Senate and the committees of the Senate of Puerto Rico several houses at an exorbitant cost of more than one hundred and fifty two hundred thousand dollars, a house that does not cost eighty thousand dollars in an urbanization. If you want, we can go now and visit several houses in Guayanilla, several houses that have been built in Peñuelas for which the contractor charges one hundred and fifty thousand dollars, and a house that does not cost eighty thousand of the cost of housing in Puerto Rico that the Department of Housing to do justice to all those in need, what is the Department of Housing going to do to not allow the money that is being assigned to be well used for the benefit of people who are really suffering like Doña Lidia who when I heard her there broke me the heart.

I am sure that she, along with her husband, put their hearts out to have decent housing for her and her family who lost it in the earthquake, that it is no one's fault, it is nature, but then help comes, perhaps it is a house that does not meet expectations lived for 30 years of effort and sacrifice.

Now, my question within the amendments within the amendments of the funds that are going to be given could not be used to tell her what money she invested in her home so that she has the same house that she had and if you have doubts you audit it , but you do not give the money to a contractor who builds a house with minimal housing at a luxury housing cost and who does not meet the expectations of the people who suffered in Puerto Rico, that is the concern that we bring to the Department of the Living place.

We have to have a sense of belonging, we have to have a sense of humanity, and we have to have a sense of using the funds in the best possible way to extend aid to every citizen of Puerto Rico. It is only our request and the request is based on the visits that we have made every day in each of the communities of our town.

From the Senate of Puerto Rico and our Senator Ramoncito Ruíz Nieves is in the best disposition to be an entity to help, collaborate and be a part of the help of each of the citizens and the Department of Housing, in the absence I am in complete safety Due to the commitment that you have as a senator, but that I am representing you and as the Chairman of the Government Commission of

the Senate of the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, you have the confidence in the Department of Housing to communicate with us and we are to serve you, to help each one of the citizens who are here and if we have to visit you, I will go with you, that is how we will do it, that is our commitment from the Senate of Puerto Rico. I don't want to go on any further, I don't know if anyone else wants to talk

MRS.MODERATOR

Thank you Mr. Irán, the State Housing Department as well as the federal one take these concerns without a doubt, we will also share them with CONSUR, which is the organization that will be supporting the municipalities to attend to and better use those funds. We know that these public hearings are the first approach to receive precisely that input from Mrs. Ruth, Mrs. Lidia from Mr. Iran, but that they will not hold the only public hearings in addition to the next three that there are.

During the month of January, a process of rapprochement will also begin, already focused on the dialogue conversation communities in order to be able to make and attend to the current needs. We take all this with us and we appreciate the senator's availability to become part of these efforts.

Anyone else wanting to express themselves right now? If you had not registered, it is important that as an opponent your name and where you visit us from.

MRS. Miriam Vargas

My name is Miriam Vargas, I also lost my house, I live in a

unit, I'm at the agency waiting, that's uphill, they told me, they always tell me the same thing and that's why I'm here. Living in a module this morning I was the first to run out of the car because my house looks like a hammock and I ran out like a road imagine, Thank you from Yauco.

MRS.MODERATOR

Thank you, for having made the space to come and find out how you can be part of these efforts and benefit from the program. This is a first step that everyone has to take to be informed and to be able to seek that help.

Alright, anyone else who has the desire to express themselves this is your moment this is the space. In addition, they know that we are going to have three additional views, plus we are receiving those comments until December 4th.

Well, no one else is encouraging me at this time, I have to thank everyone who has been encouraged, right, contribute experiences, suggestions, concerns, also thank everyone present, thank Planner Carlos Olmedos for giving us that explanation of the program .

To the mayor of Yauco who received us this morning and who has presented to all of you how the municipal progress is going in the municipality of Yauco, but also those regional efforts, this idea of having a CONSUR organization that can from the South to manage and better monitor these funds, these recovery strategies, all those ideas and that work together, the six mayors have had to sit down for the benefit of their region, it is not a municipality and the

other is an entire region and that needs that help and they have sat down as a work team and have promoted this organization that we call CONSUR and that we are sure will be of great benefit in the recovery processes.

Alright, we want to thank everyone and we're all going to wrap up the public hearing process tomorrow morning for the first substantive amendment to the 2019-2020 Earthquake Recovery Action Plan and 2020 Tropical Storm Funds CDBG-DR from the Puerto Rico Department of Housing.

Without first reminding you that on Friday, December 9 at 10:00 am Barrio Playa Community Center in Guayanilla, Wednesday, December 14 at 10:00 am Club Puertorriqueño, Ensenada in Guánica and that same day at 4:00 pm we will be at the Cultural Center of Lajas in Anastasio Ruiz Irizarry. Thus, there is still an opportunity to make ourselves listen to bring suggestions, concerns. If we want to do it in writing, we also have the option of making our comments in writing on our website. We appreciate the mobilization today morning we have a full house.

Thank you very much to all of you for your appearance. Without further ado, we fired them and closed the works at 11:50 am

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HE GAVE BY FINISHED THE VIEW PUBLIC

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CERTIFICATION OF THE STENOGRAPHER

I CERTIFY that the that precedes is the transcription

faithful and correct of the record taken by he subscriber of the  
testimony borrowed and of the procedures occurred during is  
deposition.

In San Juan, Puerto Rico, Thursday, February 9, 2023.

Tiffany J Carrasquillo Rodriguez

Executive Secretary or  
Transcriptor of the Public  
References Hearing division of  
Public and Communities Affairs  
CDBD-DR/MIT Programs  
Department of Housing



