



October 18, 2017

The Honorable Dr. Ben Carson  
Secretary  
U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development  
451 Seventh Street, SW  
Washington, DC 20410

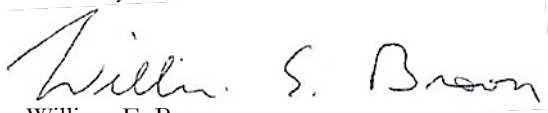
Dear Secretary Carson:

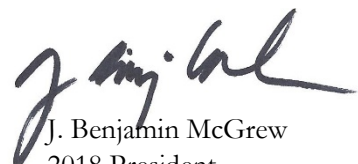
The National Association of REALTORS®, and its affiliate, the Institute of Real Estate Management, whose members manage nearly 40% of all federally assisted housing units, understand the challenge that unprecedented natural disasters have placed on our nation. The Department of Housing and Urban Development has been on the forefront of disaster recovery as communities rebuild, and American families seek shelter and a return to their homes and their lives. The situation facing our citizens, including those living in federally subsidized housing units, in Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands (USVI) remains significantly dire, and requires extraordinary measures and consideration.

We understand that the Department has made a decision to remove federal housing subsidies from all units that do not have electricity, as these units appear to not fit the “decent, safe and sanitary” standard. Our members who manage properties in Puerto Rico and the USVI are going to heroic efforts to ensure their residents are suitably housed. As you know, the electric grids in the islands sustained significant damage, and electricity is expected to be out for many weeks, even months. To consider terminating assistance where it is impossible for owners to obtain commercial power is an extraordinary burden to owners who are already doing all they can to assist their residents. Gasoline and Diesel is challenging and expensive to obtain, although our members have gone through extreme lengths to try to ensure properties are receiving as much generated power as possible. However, delays of supplies at the airport and ports, as well as shortages is making the situation nearly impossible.

Penalizing these properties and, more importantly, these tenants is simply adding more hardship to this community. Without the federal portion of the rent, many of these properties will simply fail, and this stock of affordable housing will be lost. We urge you to provide special waivers in this uncommon situation. When properties are in an otherwise safe and habitable condition, HUD should continue to provide rental assistance. Without it, the islands and the residents of these assisted units will be in far worse condition than they are currently experiencing.

Sincerely,

  
William E. Brown  
2017 President  
National Association of REALTORS®

  
J. Benjamin McGrew  
2018 President  
The Institute of Real Estate Management

cc: Pamela Patenaude  
Deputy Secretary  
U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development