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(Original Signature of Member)

119TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

H. RES. _____

Recognizing the eighth anniversary of Hurricane Maria's destruction of Puerto Rico and the United States Virgin Islands.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Mr. HERNÁNDEZ submitted the following resolution; which was referred to the Committee on _____

RESOLUTION

Recognizing the eighth anniversary of Hurricane Maria's destruction of Puerto Rico and the United States Virgin Islands.

Whereas, on September 20, 2017, Hurricane Maria made landfall near Yabucoa, Puerto Rico, as a Category 4 hurricane with maximum sustained winds of 155 miles per hour, when Puerto Rico and the United States Virgin Islands were still recovering from Hurricane Irma's impact just 14 days prior;

Whereas the official death toll in Puerto Rico from Hurricane Maria is above 4,000, making it the second deadliest storm in United States history;

Whereas Hurricane Maria caused a catastrophic failure of Puerto Rico's electrical grid, producing the longest black-out in United States history that required over 11 months to recuperate, and left millions of Puerto Ricans without power or basic services;

Whereas communications were crippled as 95 to 96 percent of cell sites in Puerto Rico were out of service, and 48 out of 78 municipalities had 100 percent of cell sites down, with outages persisting months later;

Whereas Hurricane Maria triggered more than 40,000 landslides, with the rural communities at the mountainous interior of the island being hit the hardest;

Whereas critical water infrastructure and dam safety was threatened, particularly the Guajataca Dam that prompted evacuation warnings affecting 70,000 residents;

Whereas the Puerto Rican agricultural sector suffered 80 percent losses, totaling \$780,000,000, with the destruction of thousands of plantain, banana, and coffee farms;

Whereas Hurricane Maria has been one of the most expensive natural disasters in United States history, with damage estimates as high as \$115,200,000,000;

Whereas Hurricane Maria caused massive displacement and migration, with an estimated 4 percent of the population, or 130,000 people, leaving Puerto Rico in the aftermath;

Whereas Hurricane Maria disproportionately devastated vulnerable groups, including seniors, children, and individuals with chronic medical conditions, limiting their access to medical care, emergency services, medication, and dialysis machines, and all 47 of Puerto Rico's dialysis centers lost power, causing critical disruptions in patient care;

Whereas Hurricane Maria ignited a severe mental health crisis across Puerto Rico, as the island's suicide prevention hotline experienced a 246-percent increase in calls from individuals who had attempted suicide, and the suicide death toll climbed by 29 percent from the previous year;

Whereas Federal support has been significant, but long-term efforts are still needed: while the Federal Emergency Management Agency has allocated over \$23,400,000,000 in public assistance to Puerto Rico's recovery, bureaucratic delays and bottlenecks in disbursement have slowed reconstruction and prolonged hardship for affected communities;

Whereas the Department of Housing and Urban Development has allocated more than \$20,000,000,000 in Community Development Block Grant Disaster Recovery funds, but oversight from an April 2024 report by the Office of the Inspector General of Housing and Urban Development identified serious bottlenecks and delays in the release and use of those funds;

Whereas, in the direct aftermath of Hurricane Maria, States and municipalities of the United States mobilized to assist Puerto Rico in the form of personnel, equipment, and relief centers; New York deployed more than 450 utility and relief workers; Florida established disaster relief centers for arriving evacuees; and States across the Nation facilitated aid through the Emergency Management Assistance Compact;

Whereas nongovernmental organizations provided essential humanitarian assistance, including the Red Cross, which distributed more than 11,000,000 meals and 2,700 generators, and organizations such as Direct Relief, which

supplied over \$70,000,000 in medical supplies to hospitals and clinics on the island;

Whereas the Puerto Rican diaspora communities in the mainland United States were instrumental in relief, advocacy, and long-term recovery efforts, raising millions of dollars from personal donations, coordinating supply shipments, and sheltering and employing displaced communities;

Whereas the people of Puerto Rico and the United States Virgin Islands, both on the islands and across the mainland, have demonstrated extraordinary strength and resilience in the face of enormous hardship;

Whereas the underlying vulnerabilities that contributed to the humanitarian crisis in Puerto Rico after Hurricane Maria continue to exist, including an underresourced health care system and a scarcity of medical specialists; and

Whereas Puerto Rico continues to suffer massive, islandwide power outages frequently, especially after Hurricane Fiona in 2022 and Hurricane Erin in 2025, underscoring the ongoing infrastructural fragility and the urgency of more resilient reconstruction: Now, therefore, be it

- 1 *Resolved*, That the House of Representatives—
- 2 (1) commemorates the eighth anniversary of
- 3 Hurricane Maria, honors the memory of those whose
- 4 lives were lost, and stands with the survivors in
- 5 Puerto Rico and the United States Virgin Islands
- 6 who continue to endure its lasting impacts;
- 7 (2) urges the Federal Emergency Management
- 8 Agency Administrator to expedite the full disbursement of critical recovery funds, recognizing that
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1 every day of delay prolongs hardship and hinders
2 Puerto Rico's and the United States Virgin Islands'
3 reconstruction; and

4 (3) calls upon Congress and the Administration
5 to prioritize resilient infrastructure investments in
6 Puerto Rico and the United States Virgin Islands,
7 including modernizing its energy grid, strengthening
8 health care capacity, and ensuring equitable disaster
9 recovery for future natural disasters.