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October 11, 2017

The Honorable Rick Scott  
Governor, State of Florida  
400 S. Monroe Street  
Tallahassee, FL 32399

RE: Hurricane Irma Recovery Priorities for Florida

Governor Scott:

I regret that I had a conflict this morning and was unable to attend the Florida Congressional Delegation meeting with you and Commissioner Adam Putnam to discuss Hurricane Irma Recovery priorities. I have a number of concerns and recommendations that I am pleased to relay to you.

First, I strongly encourage you to waive Florida KidCare premiums imposed by the state just as the State of Texas has done for its families who rely on state children's health insurance. I understand the State of Florida has extended the payment deadline to October 31, 2017 for families, but at that time 2 months of premiums will be due and if they are unable to pay, children will lose coverage. These hardworking families have been through so much and would benefit greatly from relief. While \$20.00 may not seem like a lot to you or others, it can be a large amount for families in my district who always have tight monthly budgets. This is especially true this fall for those of my neighbors who were unable to work due to Hurricane Irma. I urge you to immediately send a request to the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) to waive any premiums, copays or other fees associated with Florida KidCare as the Governor of Texas has done.

Second, I urge you to change your position which hinders the removal of the overwhelming amount of debris sitting in front of homes and businesses and echo the concerns raised by Representatives Bill Posey and Debbie Wasserman Schultz. Only you can help break the log jam on debris removal by allowing above “pre-disaster” rates. The bipartisan Congressional Delegation is working diligently to address the issue for local governments of pre-hurricane contracts (that now are de facto defunct due to more lucrative post-hurricane deals that have been struck and have drawn workers elsewhere). There does not appear to be a better course of action to speed debris removal other than an agreement by you to allow such rates and notice to FEMA. It’s now been over one month since Hurricane Irma raked our entire state. Local communities are still piled high with debris. We need you to do everything in your power as Governor to get the debris removed. The impact to the health and safety of citizens increases every day that the debris sits. Again, I urge you to reverse your instruction to the Florida Division of Emergency Management (FDEM) regarding reimbursement requests in excess of “pre-disaster” rates. With little or no contractors available at “pre-disaster” rates, irrationally sticking by such rates simply means debris will clog our communities for weeks or maybe months.

There are many other recovery and resiliency issues that we must address together in the days ahead. These are two primary concerns that need your attention right away. I urge you to help Florida families and communities to move on from this most difficult hurricane season in doing so. If you have any questions or comments, please contact me or Kevin Karpay at 813-871-2817 or 202-225-3376.

Sincerely,



Kathy Castor  
United States Representative  
Florida – District 14

Cc: Bob Buckhorn, Mayor, City of Tampa  
Mike Merrill, County Administrator, Hillsborough County, Florida