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CONSENT CALENDAR

July 10, 2018

To: Honorable Mayor and Members of the City Council
From: Councilmembers Kriss Worthington, Cheryl Davila, and Sophie Hahn
Subject: Support disaster recovery bills H.R.4557 & 5474 and S.2996 & 2880 to help ensure low income survivors receive long-term recovery, restoration of infrastructure and housing, economic revitalization, and send letters to Congress.

RECOMMENDATION:

That the Berkeley City Council supports disaster recovery bills (H.R.4557 & 5474 and S.2996 & 2880), and the coordination within federal agencies for entering into agreements with the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) to set up a Disaster Housing Assistance Program to administer a disaster voucher program. And the Council sends a letter in support to Congressional Sponsors Representative Ann Wagner, Senator Elizabeth Warren, Senator Bill Nelson, Senator Dianne Feinstein, Senator Kamala Harris, and Representative Barbara Lee.

BACKGROUND:

The Reforming Disaster Recovery Act (H.R. 4557) was introduced by the House Financial Services Committee. It authorizes the Secretary of Housing and Urban Development to provide disaster assistance to States and units of general government under the Community Development Block Grant Disaster Recovery Program (CDBG-DR), which will be distributed to low and moderate income communities.

The Housing Victims of Major Disasters Act (S. 2996 and H.R. 5474) and the Disaster Housing Assistance Act (S. 2880) direct the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), to activate the Disaster Housing Assistance Program (DHAP) to provide assistance for families affected by major disasters, with direct rental assistance to help them live in affordable, stable homes during the recovery process.

H.R.4557: <https://www.congress.gov/bill/115th-congress/house-bill/4557>

H.R. 5474: <https://www.congress.gov/bill/115th-congress/house-bill/5474>

S. 2880: <https://www.congress.gov/bill/115th-congress/senate-bill/2880>

S. 2996: <https://www.congress.gov/bill/115th-congress/senate-bill/2996>

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS: Minimal.

ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

Consistent with Berkeley's Environmental Sustainability Goals and no negative impact.

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ATTACHMENT: Letter

Dear members of Congress,

The City of Berkeley urges you to strongly support the Reforming Disaster Recovery Act (H.R. 4557), the Housing Victims of Major Disaster Acts (S. 2996 & H.R. 5474) and the Disaster Housing Act (S. 2880). The bills help ensure low income survivors receive long-term recovery, restoration of infrastructure and housing, and economic revitalization followed to natural and man-made disasters.

We are grateful that the Reforming Disaster Recovery Act permanently authorizes the federal government's primary long term disaster rebuilding program, the Community Development Block Grant Disaster Recovery (CDBG-DR) program, which provides states and communities with the flexible resources needed to rebuild affordable housing and infrastructure after a disaster. The bills also establish important safeguards and tools to help ensure that federal disaster recovery and rebuilding efforts reach the lowest incomes households, who are often the hardest-hit by disasters and have the fewest resources to recover. We are especially pleased this bills include measures that ensure scarce resources are prioritized for low income survivors and communities that face the greatest recovery needs. The bills require states to allocate resources equitably between housing and infrastructure priorities and among homeowners, renters, and people experiencing homelessness. The bills solidify in statute the requirement that 70 percent of funds must benefit low and moderate income communities and sets clearer direction to the Department of Housing and Urban Development on when it can adjust this requirement. By directing the Office of Inspector General to oversee program outcomes, the bills will help ensure that CDBG-DR delivers on Congress's intent to serve all eligible survivors. The bills promote transparency and accountability of disaster data including how resources are spent, allowing effective public participation in the development of state recovery plans, and helping state and local governments and philanthropic organizations better identify critical gaps in services. The authorization bill also helps Congress ensure that the recovery process is administered consistently and that dollars can flow more quickly to communities in need. In conjunction with NLIHC and the DHRC, we commend you for your leadership in drafting this landmark legislation, which would ensure that federal recovery efforts are better able to reach the lowest income seniors, people with disabilities, families with children, people experiencing homelessness, and other vulnerable people and the communities they live in. We look forward to working with Congressional leaders to enact this important legislation.

Respectfully, The Berkeley City Council