

COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS,
RANKING MEMBER

SUBCOMMITTEE ON STATE, FOREIGN
OPERATIONS, AND RELATED PROGRAMS,
RANKING MEMBER



Nita M. Lowey
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March 19, 2013

Secretary Shaun Donovan
U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development
451 7th Street, S.W.
Washington, DC 20410

Dear Secretary Donovan,

I have serious concerns regarding the estimates and methodology that the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) used to determine the "most impacted and distressed" counties designation for New York State's allocation of \$1.713 billion Community Development Block Grant Disaster Relief (CDBG-DR) funds from the Disaster Relief Appropriations Act of 2013.

After many months of touring my district and speaking to hundreds of small business owners and homeowners in Rockland and Westchester County and reviewing recent SBA and FEMA data, I've determined that Westchester County suffered equivalent if not greater damage than Rockland County, which was identified along with Nassau and Suffolk County as a "most impacted and distressed" county.

On Friday March 15th, at the Transportation, Housing, and Urban Development Appropriations Subcommittee hearing regarding Sandy Disaster Relief and Recovery, I requested an explanation from HUD Senior Advisor, Fred Tombar, regarding why Westchester County did not receive the "most impacted and distressed" county designation for this first round allocation of CDBG.

FEMA reported 985 damaged owner-occupied homes and rental properties for Westchester County and 663 damaged properties for Rockland County. Based on the most current SBA data supplied by New York State, Westchester County has submitted 70 applications with 6 approved, and Rockland County has submitted 55 applications with 5 approved.

I respectfully request that you review this matter and provide me with a written explanation as to why Westchester County did not receive the "most impacted and distressed" county designation. If your review finds that this decision was made in error, I urge HUD to immediately designate Westchester County as a "most impacted and distressed" county for prior and future CDBG allocations for Sandy relief.

Additionally, if your review finds that Westchester County should not receive this designation for this initial CDBG allocation, can you please confirm that the "most impacted and distressed" county list will be updated in future allocations to reflect current unmet needs for housing, small business and infrastructure damage?

From my conversations with you and those between our staffs over the last few months, it is my understanding that Westchester County municipalities, non-profits, businesses, and homeowners who have unmet needs from Tropical Storm Sandy will not be punished for the ongoing legal dispute between the County and the Department. Since HUD released its initial CDBG-DR allocation, a number of local elected officials have speculated that the absence of this designation is clear proof to the contrary. Can you please also clearly address this matter in your response?

Thank you for your continued efforts to help individual, businesses, and communities repair, rebuild, and recover from the devastating impacts of Tropical Storm Sandy.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Nita M. Lowey". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large, sweeping initial "N" and a long, horizontal flourish at the end.

Nita M. Lowey
Member of Congress