



CITY OF HOUSTON

Sylvester Turner

Mayor

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February 17, 2020

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Senate Majority Leader
317 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Charles Schumer
Senate Minority Leader
322 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senators McConnell and Schumer,

I write today to request your support for the Hazard Eligibility and Local Projects (HELP) Act. This legislation helps compress the timeline for post-disaster recovery projects by allowing pre-award activity such as the purchase of rights-of-way for Hazard Mitigation Projects under the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA).

Under current law, local and state agencies applying for federal money to begin recovery projects must wait until they receive approval from FEMA before purchasing land or starting construction. If local officials purchase land or begin construction without an answer on their eligibility, the project is disqualified from receiving federal assistance. This requirement prevents important resiliency projects from starting and precludes communities from rebuilding as quickly as possible, ultimately making communities wait for years to find out they may not even be eligible.

House Resolution 2548, was passed by the House of Representatives on December 17th by a vote of 409 to 7. Senator John Cornyn introduced the HELP Act in the Senate on February 12, 2020, along with cosponsors Sen. Ted Cruz, Sen. Tom Tillis, and Sen. Doug Jones. This bipartisan legislation will expedite the start of certain hazard mitigation projects after natural disasters.

Local municipalities need more flexible program requirements that expedite project delivery through pre-award activity authorization. I hope you will join your House colleagues and support this significant step forward in disaster recovery.

Sincerely,

Handwritten signature of Sylvester Turner in blue ink.

Sylvester Turner
Mayor