

Plaskett, Gonzalez-Colon Introduce Measure With Aim of Improving Resiliency as USVI and Puerto Rico Rebuild

Disaster Recovery / **Published On March 25, 2021 06:23 AM /**

Staff Consortium **March 25, 2021**

Image not found or type unknown



A community in Puerto Rico after Hurricane Maria slammed the island commonwealth in 2017.

Congresswomen Stacey E. Plaskett and Jenniffer González-Colón of the U.S. Virgin Islands and Puerto Rico respectively, have introduced legislation they say will allow the two U.S. territories to rebuild additional infrastructure to be more resilient than prior to recent disasters.

"In the Bipartisan Budget Act of 2018, there was a recognition from Congress as to the sweeping destruction inflicted on the Virgin Islands and Puerto Rico by Hurricanes Irma and Maria in 2017," said Ms. Plaskett in a statement. "FEMA was given flexibility to make repairs and replace

infrastructure on the islands to incorporate resilient design and features, regardless of pre-disaster condition (the standard that normally applies). However, eligibility was limited to infrastructure providing critical services – schools, hospitals, utilities, etc. In addition, according to FEMA, this assistance cannot apply to damages caused by disasters declared after 2017, such as the recent earthquakes in Puerto Rico, without congressional action."

The congresswoman said the measure she has introduced along with Ms. González-Colón, named the Resiliency Enhancement Act of 2021, seeks to expand infrastructure eligible for additional resiliency assistance to include roads, bridges, ports, airports, affordable housing, and stormwater infrastructure as the islands build back, which would minimize the need for future taxpayer investments in recovery.

"It would also apply this additional assistance to any major disaster declared in the Virgin Islands or Puerto Rico through fiscal year 2022," Ms. Plaskett stated. She said the legislation has been referred to the House Committee on Transportation & Infrastructure, which she hopes will approve it for consideration by the full House of Representatives in the coming weeks.

"With climate change fixed on the radar of corporate and civil risk managers around the world, more and more attention needs to turn towards resilience and working out effective measures and solutions for global disaster loss reduction. This bill will do just that," said Ms. Plaskett.