

NC Inclusive Disaster Recovery Network (NCIDR)

Facilitated by MDC Inc.

Tuesday, October 8, 2024

Dear Members of the NC General Assembly,

The NC Inclusive Disaster Recovery Network is a statewide, cross-sector coalition of over 300 organizations founded in 2016. We work towards a disaster recovery system where all North Carolina communities can fully recover.

As you look toward the policymaking response to Hurricane Helene, we want to offer our experiences and insights gained through working directly with communities and organizations disproportionately impacted by multiple hurricanes and the COVID-19 pandemic. Given your return to Raleigh for an already scheduled session this week, we are sharing a framework we hope will guide your immediate response and mid-term planning.

Principles for the Short-Term

1. **Ensure everyone impacted gets help.** Policies should ensure relief and rebuilding efforts reach all North Carolinians by minimizing barriers to access and stabilizing conditions. From past disasters, we know that the state's most vulnerable individuals include the lowest-income survivors, rural residents, seniors, people with disabilities, people experiencing homelessness, people of color, and people with limited English proficiency.
 - a. Allocate funding for trusted community-based organizations to support service delivery or serve as resource navigators, similar to partnerships established by the NC Department of Health and Human Services during COVID-19;
 - b. Require agencies to make all information and materials accessible for people with disabilities, such as those with vision impairment or hearing loss, and for people with limited English proficiency;
 - c. Allocate funding and provide flexibility for local governments to adapt their services to meet the needs of their communities by hiring additional staff or improving communication channels with their constituents;
 - d. Aligned with the Chief Justice's recent order expanding access to legal services for disaster survivors, allocate funding for public interest law firms so that people can receive the support they are eligible for, including those with heirs property.



2. **Meet the full range of needs of disaster survivors.** Even as the immediate response must focus on ensuring the safety and care of the most basic needs facing survivors, we know from the experiences in Eastern NC after hurricanes that it is essential to address the full range of needs from mental and behavioral health to physical infrastructure.
 - a. Fund water infrastructure and testing;
 - b. Expand access to mental and behavioral healthcare;
 - c. Expand access to mobile hotspots and wifi;
 - d. Ensure access to food, cash assistance, and non-congregant temporary housing by ensuring agencies can access necessary flexibilities and are funded for delivery and implementation;
 - e. Stabilize public school and child care providers so that educators are paid while schools and child cares are closed and rebuilt;
 - f. Create an eviction moratorium similar to the response to COVID.
3. **Build durable public capacity to apply for and deploy the range of state and federal recovery opportunities.** Administrative capacity and coordination is key to stewarding public dollars, reaching those in need, and engaging with the public. Councils of Government and local government associations have played an important role to this end in accessing American Rescue Plan Act funds, and we see the real-time work of the Land of Sky Council of Governments among others following Hurricane Helene. These entities need financial and human capacity to ensure any non-federal match requirements or administrative burdens are not a barrier for smaller local governments to access federal aid.

Principles for the Mid-Term and Long-Term

As our state moves towards long-term recovery and mitigation to build resilience for future disasters, we ask for your consideration of two additional principles.

4. **Encourage state agencies and their nongovernmental partners to listen to and hold themselves accountable to the people directly impacted.** The NC Office of Recovery and Resiliency established a Citizen Advisory Council for the CDBG-MIT program, which has been praised by its members as a valuable way to have their voices heard. In a similar vein, your Joint Legislative Commission on Government Operations has created avenues to amplify the voices of your constituents and maintained oversight on long-term recovery from Hurricanes Matthew and Florence to ensure a full recovery.

5. **Address the underlying conditions that put rural communities and others at greater risk during disasters and recovery.** Out of this disaster, the state has the opportunity to work on the root causes of disparate impacts and ensure the state has reliable revenue and human resources to invest in mitigation efforts that protect Western North Carolina's unique agricultural, tourism, and small business economy.

We stand ready to work with you for the long term to ensure that people and communities can inform policy priorities and build the systems our state needs to be resilient.

We invite you to reach out to our staff coordinator Andrew Loeb Shoenig to schedule a meeting with members of our network if you are interested in dialogue on these opportunities.

Contact:

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Learn more: InclusiveDisasterRecovery.org

This letter is co-signed by the following members of the Network's Policy Team:

1. AARP NC, Raleigh, NC
2. Catholic Charities of the Diocese of Raleigh, Raleigh, NC
3. Centro Unido Latino Americano, Marion, NC
4. City of Henderson (Mayor), Henderson, NC
5. Democracy NC, Morrisville, NC
6. Disability Rights North Carolina, Raleigh, NC
7. Gang Free Inc, Henderson, NC
8. Hispanic Federation, Charlotte, NC
9. Kinston Teens Inc, Kinston, NC
10. Land Loss Prevention Project, Durham, NC
11. Mecklenburg Metropolitan Interfaith Network, Charlotte, NC
12. MDC Inc., Durham, NC
13. National Emergency Childcare Network, Durham, NC
14. National Low Income Housing Coalition, Washington, DC
15. NC Black Alliance, Durham, NC
16. NC Budget & Tax Center, Durham, NC

17. NC Community Health Workers Association, Newton, NC
18. NC Council of Churches, Raleigh, NC
19. NC Counts Coalition, Raleigh, NC
20. NC Housing Coalition, Durham, NC
21. NC Interfaith Power & Light, Raleigh, NC
22. NC Justice Center, Raleigh, NC
23. NC One Hundred Strong, Reidsville, NC
24. NC Rural Center, Raleigh, NC
25. NC Statewide Independent Living Council, Wilmington, NC
26. NC Tenants Union, Durham, NC
27. Partners Aligned Toward Health, Burnsville, NC
28. Partners In Health United States, NC
29. Robeson County Church and Community Center, Lumberton, NC
30. Southeastern Healthcare of North Carolina, Inc., Raleigh, NC
31. Southeastern Wake Adult Day Center, Inc., Raleigh, NC
32. Southern Environmental Law Center, Chapel Hill, NC
33. United Way of North Carolina, Cary, NC
34. Vanceboro Christian Help Center, Vanceboro, NC
35. West Marion Inc., Marion, NC