



FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
WASHINGTON

OFFICE OF THE
CHAIRWOMAN

November 26, 2021

The Honorable Mike Quigley
Chairman
Committee on Appropriations
Subcommittee on Financial Services and General Government
U.S. House of Representatives
2000 Rayburn House Office Building (G Floor)
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Quigley:

On June 1, 2021, the Government Accountability Office (GAO) released a report titled, “FCC Assisted in Hurricane Maria Network Restoration but a Clarified Disaster Response Role and Enhanced Communications Are Needed” (Report). The Report examines the actions of the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) to support telecommunications restoration in Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands after the devastating Hurricane Maria in 2017, the extent to which the FCC’s disaster response role is clearly defined, the FCC’s efforts to identify lessons learned with public input, and the extent to which the FCC publicly communicated those efforts.

In its Report, GAO makes two recommendations to improve coordination of the federal disaster response and ensure effective communication to the public. The first of GAO’s recommendations is addressed to the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS):

The Secretary of Homeland Security, in consultation with FCC, should update Emergency Support Function #2 to list specific roles and responsibilities for FCC, including identifying new or evolving technologies that could assist disaster response efforts and supporting training or exercises on the appropriate use of such technologies prior to disasters.

GAO’s second recommendation, addressed to the FCC, states:

The Chair of FCC should enhance the transparency and accountability of FCC's operations by publicly reporting on the actions and findings of its Hurricane Recovery Task Force and determine if any changes in policy are needed to ensure FCC has transparent operations for any future disaster-related task forces.

In their April 12, 2021, response to the draft report, the FCC’s Managing Director and Chief of the Public Safety and Homeland Security Bureau concurred with respect to both of GAO’s recommendations and reiterated the FCC’s commitment to ensuring that all Americans—especially citizens of the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands impacted by

Hurricane Maria in 2017—can secure and maintain reliable and resilient communications services.

I agree that when devastating hurricanes batter our coastlines, we need a full Commission report on these storms. We need to know what worked, what didn't, and where we can improve our communications infrastructure. Once we know the facts, we need a full plan for fixing the communications vulnerabilities we are finding, including how to deal with the impact on 911. Mother Nature's wrath is sure to visit us again, and it is incumbent on us to learn from these disasters to improve emergency response and infrastructure recovery.

Regarding GAO's first recommendation, the FCC is consulting with DHS regarding our role in Emergency Support Function #2 (ESF#2) and contributed to DHS's in-progress update of the ESF#2 Communications Annex, which describes the roles and responsibilities of ESF#2 participants, including the FCC. In coordination with the Federal Emergency Management Agency and the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency, the FCC offered content for the update and will continue to participate in ESF#2 planning. When the update is released, we will review the update and meet with DHS to form a joint position on our roles and responsibilities and to explore the possibility of a joint response to GAO on the implementation of this recommendation.

We also provided an outline of our roles and responsibilities for inclusion in the update underway of the Response and Recovery Federal Interagency Operational Plan, which describes how the federal government aligns resources and delivers core capabilities to implement the National Response Framework and its support Annexes, such as ESF#2. Elements of that outline include:

- Activating the FCC's Disaster Information Reporting System and sharing information with ESF#2 partners as well as with the public;
- Investigating and determining the status of communications services in areas impacted by disasters;
- Taking measures to enable the temporary provision of emergency communications and the rapid repair and restoration of permanent communications services and infrastructure;
- Providing guidance to state, local, Tribal, and territorial officials that would promote the resilience and reliability of 911 communications, emergency alerts, and interoperable public safety communications; and
- Deploying FCC personnel during disasters to support the National and Regional Response Coordination Centers.

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I am committed to ensuring the transparent operation of any future disaster-related work, including task forces. I appreciate the opportunity to comment on the Report and would be happy to discuss it further if you have any questions.

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Jessica Rosenworcel



FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
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November 26, 2021

The Honorable Steve Womack
Ranking Member
Committee on Appropriations
Subcommittee on Financial Services and General Government
U.S. House of Representatives
1016 Longworth Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Ranking Member Womack:

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November 26, 2021

The Honorable Chris Van Hollen
Chairman
Committee on Appropriations
Subcommittee on Financial Services and General Government
United States Senate
S-128 The Capital Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Van Hollen:

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FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
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CHAIRWOMAN

November 26, 2021

The Honorable Cindy Hyde-Smith
Ranking Member
Committee on Appropriations
Subcommittee on Financial Services and General Government
United States Senate
125 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Ranking Member Hyde-Smith:

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November 26, 2021

The Honorable Maria Cantwell
Chair
Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation
United States Senate
512 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Madam Chair:

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November 26, 2021

The Honorable Roger Wicker
Ranking Member
Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation
United States Senate
425 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

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2125 Rayburn House Office Building
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FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
WASHINGTON

OFFICE OF THE
CHAIRWOMAN

November 26, 2021

The Honorable Cathy McMorris Rodgers
Ranking Member
Committee on Energy and Commerce
U.S. House of Representatives
2322A Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Ranking Member McMorris Rodgers:

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FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
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OFFICE OF THE
CHAIRWOMAN

November 26, 2021

The Honorable Gary Peters
Chairman
Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs
United States Senate
340 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Peters:

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FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
WASHINGTON

OFFICE OF THE
CHAIRWOMAN

November 26, 2021

The Honorable Rob Portman
Ranking Member
Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs
United States Senate
442 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Ranking Member Portman:

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FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
WASHINGTON

OFFICE OF THE
CHAIRWOMAN

November 26, 2021

The Honorable Carolyn B. Maloney
Chairwoman
Committee on Oversight and Government Reform
U.S. House of Representatives
2157 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairwoman Maloney:

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FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
WASHINGTON

OFFICE OF THE
CHAIRWOMAN

November 26, 2021

The Honorable James R. Comer
Ranking Member
Committee on Oversight and Government Reform
U.S. House of Representatives
2471 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

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