



United States
Department of
Agriculture

Food and Nutrition
Service

Mid-Atlantic Region

300 Corporate Blvd
Robbinsville, NJ
08691-1598

September 30, 2017

Honorable Glorimar Andújar-Matos
Secretary
Department of the Family
PO Box 11398
San Juan, PR 00910-1398

Dear Secretary Andújar-Matos:

Thank you for your correspondence of September 28, 2017. We recognize the difficult situation occurring in Puerto Rico in the aftermath of Hurricanes Irma and Maria, and we will continue to support the nutrition assistance recovery and rebuilding efforts within the authorities available to us through our nutrition assistance programs.

As you are aware, when a disaster strikes, FEMA is the first responder and nutrition assistance is typically provided through a combination of congregate feeding in shelters and distribution of Meal, Ready-to-Eat (MRE). As the disaster response unfolds, and depending on the needs at the local level, nutrition assistance can also be provided through FNS Disaster Household Distribution.

We appreciate your leadership in the Department of the Family's submission of a Disaster Household Distribution application on September 26th, which was approved by FNS on September 27th. We understand the plan calls for an initial 9,000 boxes of shelf stable household products to be distributed to households throughout the island, with plans for a possible distribution to 500,000 households.

In response to the specific requests of your letter, the statutory intent of NAP is to provide nutrition assistance to needy persons. The NAP's role in disaster response typically occurs as the retail food supply recovers and stores are open with stock and connectivity to transact the EBT benefits. We understand that at this point in time all food retail outlets in Puerto Rico are challenged by a lack of inventory, power and connectivity issues. Additionally, ATMs are experiencing connectivity issues and limits on cash.

While we are able to provide some flexibility for NAP in a disaster response, there is a need to maintain the overall intent of the NAP as defined in the authorizing legislation. We offer the following in response to your requests:

- We approve a delay in the Fiscal Year (FY) 2018 required conversion to a 15% cash benefit portion for the months of October and November; allowing the 20% cash portion to continue for two months.
- We approve the request to waive your state plan requirements and allow hot foods to be purchased at certified retailers utilizing the EBT portion of the NAP card,

and allow the cash portion for purchases of hot foods at any retail outlet for the months of October and November.

- We concur with your plans to issue an approximate 12.5% replacement of October benefits to NAP participants in response to Hurricane Maria, calculated based on the funds remaining in the funds set aside for disaster relief in FY2017.

My staff and I continue to be available to answer any questions and to provide technical assistance as we respond to Hurricanes Irma and Maria. We will continue to evaluate any modifications or additions to your disaster response requests as conditions on the ground shift and new information becomes available,

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Patricia N. Dombroski". The signature is written in black ink and is enclosed within a thin black rectangular border.

Patricia N. Dombroski
Administrator
Mid-Atlantic Region