



American Planning Association  
**New Jersey Chapter**

*Making Great Communities Happen*

**March 18, 2019**

US Representative Bonnie Watson Coleman  
2442 Rayburn HOB  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative Watson Coleman:

I write to you on the behalf of the American Planning Association, New Jersey Chapter. APA New Jersey represents nearly 5,000 planners, planning officials and engaged citizens across our state. Our members work to create just, healthy, and prosperous communities that expand opportunity for all. Promoting safer and more resilient communities is critical to this work and core federal infrastructure programs have the potential to directly support local resiliency efforts.

During the Subcommittee's recent hearing, "Stakeholder Perspectives: Building Resilient Communities", APA member Jennifer Raitt testified that federal programs must no longer build back communities to status quo, but rather build beyond the next hazard. Planning, she argued, is critical for ensuring that federal dollars translate to resilient local actions. She pointed specifically to four approaches the federal government should take to better support localities in their mission to become more resilient: funding, evaluation, planning, and integration. Never has such an effort been more important for New Jersey than Post Superstorm Sandy. New Jersey's economy depends on strong federal programs that guide local communities at the same time as supporting them with financial resources.

APA New Jersey fully supports Ms. Raitt's testimony and urges the federal government to take the following actions to build upon efforts that aim to integrate resiliency more intentionally into US DOT and US HUD programs:

**Boost resources available for advancing resiliency through the nation's core housing and infrastructure programs.**

- In FY2020, we urge Congress to fund CDBG at \$3.8 billion; HOME at \$1.5 billion; Choice Neighborhoods at \$200 million; and BUILD (formerly TIGER) at least at \$1 billion.
- Reject this Administration's attempts to slash these important programs.

**Incorporate resiliency criterion in the evaluation process for key discretionary grant programs.**

- Consolidated Plans required for CDBG competitive grants should integrate resiliency and evaluate the consistency of Consolidated Plans with local resiliency or hazard mitigation plans.
- Align planning processes and resilience requirements for DOT and HUD programs.
- Require an evaluation of resiliency as part of the planning process for the HUD-funded Choice Neighborhoods Initiative.

**Emphasize resilience as part of HUD's CDBG-Disaster Recovery program.**

- FEMA and HUD can improve the coordination between their required plans with funds prioritized using a resiliency focus and aligning with local plans.
- Provide financial incentives for local planning so that local governments spend CDBG-DR funds aligned with local plans.
- Target disaster recovery funds at mitigation efforts that incorporate equity thinking into Community Development Block Grant-DR funding appropriations and poverty eradication efforts for disaster-affected households that may be experiencing repetitive losses.

Among these various approaches lies the importance of partnership between localities and the federal government in order to achieve truly resilient communities. Thank you for your continued efforts to enhance this partnership and we look forward to working with you to build upon the existing foundation.

Sincerely,



**Charles Latini**  
President,  
American Planning Association  
New Jersey Chapter

**Cc: Governor Phillip Murphy**  
**Sheena Collum, APANJ Executive Director**