

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

October 13, 2017

The Honorable Eric Hargan
Acting Secretary
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
200 Independence Avenue SW
Washington, D.C. 20201

Dear Acting Secretary Hargan:

Americans in Puerto Rico are still suffering from the devastation of Hurricane Maria, and I ask you to take aggressive action to help them. In light of the island's damaged infrastructure and its residents' lack of access to power and clean water, it is critical that the island receives the resources needed to properly treat people who depend on medically necessary services. Many Floridians contact my office every day to emphasize that their family and friends in Puerto Rico are still struggling to recover from this deadly storm.

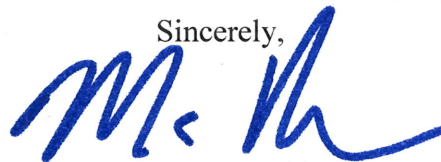
There are news reports that some water in Puerto Rico has been contaminated, causing people to contract leptospirosis, a bacterial disease that can cause kidney damage, meningitis, liver failure, and death. I am very concerned that there could be additional cases of leptospirosis or other bacterial infections, and that the island's lack of resources could prevent those infected from receiving necessary treatment.

There are also ongoing concerns about patients' access to consistent dialysis treatment and oxygen supplies. I have personally heard from providers and officials on the island that there are incredible difficulties in getting supplies for these services distributed to those in need. While I understand your department has taken steps to prevent this, I am concerned that there has not been enough progress on a plan to provide a long-term solution so patients and officials are not constantly struggling with one crisis after another.

Please provide a complete update and assessment of the public health concerns still plaguing Puerto Rico. I also urge you to immediately clarify the conflicting information reported by government officials and media outlets.

Furthermore, I request that you continue to strengthen your agency's partnership with the governor of Puerto Rico, local officials, and other federal agencies to ensure the recovery efforts are as smooth and efficient as possible. I stand ready and willing to assist in these efforts.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'M. Rubio', written in a cursive style.

Marco Rubio
U.S. Senator