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Christie Administration Seeks To Shift Federal Funds To Sandy Recovery Housing Programs

Wednesday, November 6, 2013

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Currently Waitlisted RREM and Resettlement Applicants Would Receive Federal Funds

Trenton, NJ – The Christie Administration today announced the state's request to amend the current New Jersey Disaster Recovery Action Plan to allocate additional federal funds to two Superstorm Sandy housing recovery programs and also to set aside funds for a program to demolish unsafe structures. If approved, the Action Plan amendment would enable thousands of additional Sandy-impacted homeowners to receive federal resources to assist them in their recovery effort.

"The demand for our major Sandy housing recovery programs has far exceeded available federal funding, which forced us to place many eligible families on a waitlist," said New Jersey Department of Community Affairs (DCA) Commissioner Richard E. Constable, III, whose Department administers the state's Disaster Recovery Action Plan.

"This amendment will help more Sandy-distressed homeowners get much needed monies to return to their communities to repair and rebuild their homes. In addition to helping homeowners, the amendment also seeks to eradicate threats to health or public safety in Sandy-ravaged communities by demolishing unsafe structures."

The Christie Administration opened a 14-day period through Wednesday, November 20 for the public to comment on the first substantial amendment of the Action Plan. The substantial amendment will:

Add \$110 million to the Reconstruction, Rehabilitation, Elevation, and Mitigation (RREM) Program to allow between 800 to 1,100 Sandy-impacted families currently on the waitlist to receive a RREM grant. This grant provides up to \$150,000 to help homeowners impacted by Sandy repair or rebuild their home. The program, which closed its application period on August 1, 2013, has previously reserved funding for approximately 4,300 homeowners, but more than 8,700 households remain on the program's waitlist.

Add \$35 million to the Homeowner Resettlement Program to provide each of the more than 2,100 Sandy-impacted families on the program's waitlist with a \$10,000 grant to incentivize them to stay in their home community rather than relocating. The program, which closed its application period on August 1, 2013, has sent Resettlement checks to date to more than 15,000 eligible families, who can use the money for non-construction storm-related expenses such as increases in flood insurance premiums, rent payments for temporary housing, and new furniture and appliances. With this funding reallocation, every eligible applicant who applied to the program before the August 1 deadline will now receive a Resettlement award.

Set aside \$15 million to support the demolition of unsafe Sandy-damaged structures in order to alleviate blight and address threats to public health and welfare.

In light of the U.S Department of Housing and Urban Development's (HUD) allocation schedule for Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Disaster Recovery funding, the significant waiting list for housing recovery programs, and an analysis of the State's business and housing recovery needs, the Christie Administration is seeking HUD's approval to transfer \$160 million of the federal funds designated for Grants and Forgivable Loans to Small Businesses to the above named programs.

The New Jersey Disaster Recovery Action Plan, which was approved April 29, 2013, details how the State is distributing the \$1,829,520,000 in federal CDBG Disaster Recovery funds to help homeowners, renters, businesses

and communities impacted by Sandy. Pursuant to guidelines from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), the Action Plan focuses predominantly on the nine counties most affected by the storm as determined by HUD (Atlantic, Bergen, Cape May, Essex, Hudson, Middlesex, Monmouth, Ocean, and Union) and on assisting low- to moderate-income families.

The Action Plan substantial amendment can be viewed in English and Spanish at

<http://www.nj.gov/dca/divisions/sandyrecovery/action/> on the DCA website. Written comments on the amendment will be accepted at sandy.recovery@dca.state.nj.us until 5:00 p.m. on Wednesday, November 20, 2013.

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