TEXAS GENERAL LAND OFFICE
GEORGE P. BUSH, COMMISSIONER

June 10, 2021

The Honorable Al Green
U.S. House of Representatives
2347 Rayburn HOB
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Sylvia Garcia
U.S. House of Representatives
1620 Longworth HOB
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Member of the Houston Congressional Delegation:

The GLO shares the desire to fund flood mitigation projects within Harris County and the city of Houston. Prior to drafting the federally mandated state action plan, the GLO supported Harris County and the city of Houston in requesting a direct allocation of CDBG-MIT funds from HUD. HUD denied this request and said all 49 of the Federal Disaster 4332 designated counties were eligible for funds. Without a direct allocation, the GLO was unable to direct funds or grade on a curve to give Harris County and Houston awards over their equally eligible, fellow Harvey-impacted counties and cities.

The GLO was required to develop a method of distribution that provides entities within the 49-HUD designated eligible counties an opportunity to submit projects. HUD staff provided extensive guidance to the GLO in crafting every part of the action plan. Because the CDBG-Mitigation program is new, the GLO would have regular calls with HUD to discuss the action plan. It is important to note that unlike Community Development Block Grant for Disaster Recovery (CDBG-DR) funds, HUD did not allow damage from Hurricane Harvey to be used as a metric for allocating CDBG-MIT funding. The action plan was approved by HUD and the GLO implemented it according to the HUD-approved rules.

The GLO received 290 applications totaling $6.5 billion in mitigation project requests for the initial round of the competition. Harris County entities were awarded more than $117 million in projects from the $1.2 billion available for the competition. At the direction of Commissioner George P. Bush, the GLO is now developing a new action plan amendment that will direct $750 million directly to Harris County. Harris County will be able to decide how much of that will go to the city of Houston and Harris County Flood Control District. This would bring the total awards to more than $867 million in mitigation funding for Harris County and the city of Houston of Harvey CDBG-MIT funding. Harris County set aside $120 million in infrastructure funding out of the original $2.5 billion allocated to them in the first round of Hurricane Harvey funding. The city of Houston also received a direct allocation from HUD of

$61,884,000 mitigation funding. This brings the total of mitigation and infrastructure funding provided to Harris County and the city of Houston to more than $1 billion.

Furthermore, of the $2.5 billion originally allocated to Harris County and the city of Houston, only $91,225,206 – or 3.6% of the total – has been drawn down. In contrast, the GLO has already drawn down more than $1.2 billion – nearly 35% - of the funds it is directly administering. The pace of Harris County and the city of Houston's recovery programs must increase dramatically to meet HUD's deadline or else these funds could be returned to HUD.

While these are not the only funds potentially benefiting Harris County in the broader mitigation program, it does provide a substantial amount of funds for them to use in accordance with HUD rules towards flood mitigation projects. The GLO will submit this action plan amendment to HUD for approval after adhering to all federally mandated steps required prior to submission. More information will be available as the new amendment is finalized.

We can all agree that there is not enough mitigation funding to go around. We also agree that damage should be considered when allocating mitigation funding. Commissioner Bush sent a letter to Secretary Fudge on May 27, 2021 requesting a direct allocation of $750 million to Harris County. The letter is included for reference. To date we have not received a response from HUD.

Sincerely,

Mark Havens
Chief Clerk/Deputy Land Commissioner