



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Gustavo Rivera

## STATEMENT FROM STATE SENATOR GUSTAVO RIVERA ON PUERTO RICO'S REBUILDING EFFORTS SIX MONTHS AFTER MARIA

GUSTAVO RIVERA March 21, 2018

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"Two days ago I returned home to New York from my first visit to Puerto Rico almost six months to the day since Hurricane Maria ravaged the island. While there, I had the opportunity to see firsthand the impact the disaster continues to have on the people and the systems they rely on, like water, electricity, and medical care. I was honored to meet with several mayors, non profit organizations, academic institutions, labor leaders, and an array of dedicated individuals who are working to rebuild the island they love. The resilience of the Puerto Rican people and the municipal governments of countless towns have produced a slow but deliberately grassroots recovery movement that has accomplished progress in spite of receiving minimal, inadequate and unorganized support from both the federal and central governments. The people of Puerto Rico and local governments have been left to respond to this crisis on their own, which is why half a year after the storm, thousands of them are still displaced, living without electricity or water, facing food and resource shortages, and battling serious mental and physical health emergencies. Puerto Ricans do not need charity, they need resources to increase their capacity to continue to do the work they are already doing. I saw firsthand how they have a clear sense of how to rebuild their hometowns and infrastructure to function even better than they did before the storm. We need to support

and invest in those leaders and communities working tirelessly to realize innovative visions and projects locally. I will advocate for these communities to maintain agency over what rebuilding looks like in the same way that I want my constituents to take charge of how our communities change and improve."