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January 30, 2003

The Honorable Joe Allbaugh, Director
Federal Emergency Management Agency
500 C Street
Washington, D.C. 20472

Dear Director Allbaugh,

FEMA officials are once again wrongly denying help to economic victims of 9/11, according to recent reports, by providing potential applicants with completely incorrect information about eligibility standards for FEMA's Mortgage and Rental Assistance program (MRA). Regrettably, the promulgation of misleading information by FEMA officials was a primary reason that we had urged the program's reform several months ago. While we expressed appreciation at that time for your efforts to reform the program, it has become clear that FEMA officials continue to offer harmfully inaccurate information to those inquiring about disaster aid. We write, therefore, to urge that the MRA program registration deadline of tomorrow, January 31, 2003, be extended until your office is able to show that FEMA operators have been fully educated about the actual FEMA guidelines for the MRA program. This is the only way to ensure that economic victims of 9/11 get the help they need and deserve. We also request a meeting with you to develop a plan to resolve this important issue.

Disturbingly, we have received information by three individuals regarding persistent confusion created by FEMA officials surrounding the eligibility and application process for the MRA program. We received the enclosed letter from the Henry Street Settlement Organization, notifying us that potential MRA applicants are being improperly denied access to the registration process. During the intake process the applicants were informed "they are not eligible (for the program) unless they worked one or two blocks from the world trade center." These are the very same problems that originally plagued the MRA program. It is extremely disheartening that they are reoccurring at this time. We are gravely concerned that mis-informed FEMA registration operators should taint FEMA's successful outreach campaign. In light of this information we believe FEMA's extension of the registration deadline is essential to ensure that operators can receive the necessary training and the growing body of MRA applicants can access this important program.

As you know, the MRA registration deadline will be upon us in less than 24 hours despite concrete numbers demonstrating that thousands of 9/11 economic victims are still in need of assistance. FEMA's own numbers reflect a dramatic increase in new applications mailed out in the past three weeks: 400, 681, and 1285, respectively. We believe FEMA's recently enhanced publicity campaign combining advertising in the mainstream press and notices in the subway system, which began just four weeks ago, is finally reaching thousands who may be eligible. Also, the State is just now advertising the program via unemployment


checks. As a result, thousands of people may discover that they are eligible for the MRA program after the current registration deadline passes. Given the sharply limited time between new publicity for the MRA program and the arbitrary deadline for the program's termination, we are requesting a four week extension to ensure that all eligible 9/11 economic victims can access this important eviction/foreclosure prevention program.

Once again, we request a meeting with you to discuss these vitally important concerns. We also continue to urge an immediate extension of the MRA deadline given the issues detailed above. Your office may call Jen Keaton in Congresswoman Maloney's office at (202) 225-7944 to schedule this meeting at your earliest possible convenience, and thank you in advance for your prompt response to our concerns.

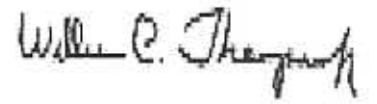

CAROLYN B. MALONEY
Member of Congress



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Speaker of the Assembly


A. GIFFORD MILLER
Speaker of the City Council


ALAN J. GERSON
City Council Member


WILLIAM THOMPSON
Comptroller


BETSY GOTBAUM
Public Advocate

Henry Street Settlement
Emergency Employment Clearinghouse (EEC)
281 East Broadway, Room 302
New York, New York 10002
(212) 346-9727/8
E-mail: eec30@juno.com

To: Congressman Maloney's office
1651 3rd Avenue
(212) 860-0704 Fax #

Att: Jessica Fox

It has come to our attention that people who we know are eligible are applying for FEMA MRA over the telephone this week, and are being told that they are not eligible unless they worked one or two blocks from the World Trade Center. They are not being given a FEMA registration number, and thus will not be able to appeal, as the registration deadline is this coming Friday, January 31.

We know this because we sent a FEMA reminder letter to our 550 applicants last week, knowing that the registration deadline was imminent. Our applicants are people who were working on 9/11/01 and were laid off or given reduced hours since then. They run the gamut from laid off Chinese-only speaking garment workers to downsized high-tech workers.

Please contact me for more information.

Judith Rubenstein
Community Liaison
Henry Street Settlement Emergency Employment Clearinghouse
Direct # (917) 566-7081

