



AMERICAN FLOOD COALITION

October 3, 2018

Dear Governor McMaster,

We are writing to ask for your leadership in addressing the frequent and severe flooding in Charleston's medical district, which is home to the Medical University of South Carolina (MUSC), Roper Hospital, and the Ralph H. Johnson VA Medical Center. It is imperative that we protect these facilities, which not only provide critical healthcare services for a broad swath of South Carolinians, but which also employ thousands and boost our state's economy. We cannot protect the hospitals without adequate funding. For that reason, we ask that a portion of South Carolina's \$157 MM in HUD Community Development Block Grants for recent disasters be directed toward Charleston's medical district.

Flooding in Charleston's medical district is our top priority. In the past, flooded roads around the hospitals have disrupted access and prevented South Carolinians from receiving care. Between 2015 and 2017, Charleston was hit by the 1,000-year deluge, Hurricane Matthew, and Hurricane Irma, all of which rendered the hospitals inaccessible and cut off connectivity between hospital buildings. During Matthew and Irma, the hospitals relied on the South Carolina National Guard to transport their personnel. Outside of major storms, we have also seen increased flooding, with a record 50 days of tidal flooding in Charleston in 2016. With minor flooding on a weekly basis and major flood events on an annual basis, we must act now to protect our hospitals.

When Charleston's medical district is cut off during flood events, the impacts ripple throughout the state. First and foremost, the 3 hospitals serve patients throughout South Carolina, treating more than 40,000 inpatients and 1.5 million outpatients annually. MUSC attracts patients from across South Carolina, since it is the state's only academic medical center, is home to the state's only nationally recognized Children's Hospital, and includes the state's only transplant center. Likewise the Ralph H. Johnson VA Medical Center serves veterans from 21 counties across coastal South Carolina and Georgia. Collectively, the 3 hospitals support more than 35,000 jobs and act as an economic engine for the Lowcountry and the state as a whole. MUSC alone has an annual economic impact of \$3.8 BN and attracts \$250 MM in research funding each year. Clearly, the impact of the hospitals extends far beyond Charleston. If we do not address the medical district's vulnerability to flooding, South Carolina's citizens and economy will remain vulnerable as well.

To protect the hospitals, we need funding at the state and federal level, and a portion of the HUD CDBG Disaster Recovery funds would serve as a good start. In April 2018, HUD allocated funds to South Carolina for Community Mitigation after the 2015 flood and Hurricane Matthew. In total South Carolina received \$157 MM through that process. The South Carolina Disaster Recovery Office will determine how those funds are allocated at the county-level, and the



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Governor has the ability to advise and make suggestions. We implore the Governor to intervene on behalf of Charleston to ensure that a portion of the HUD CDBG-DR Mitigation funds go to Charleston County for infrastructure upgrades that would protect the hospitals.

Not only is Charleston eligible for the HUD funds because Charleston County was impacted by the 2015 flood and Hurricane Matthew, but protecting the medical district would serve the low and moderate income population, which is one of HUD's national objectives. Census tracts adjacent to the medical district fall below the median income level, and employees and patients of the hospital fit within that demographic as well.

Protecting Charleston's vulnerable medical district should be a state priority. In order to demonstrate this, we ask you to lead by recommending that a substantial portion of the \$157 MM in HUD funds allocated to South Carolina in 2018 be directed toward protecting the medical district.

Sincerely,

David J. Cole M.D., President
MUSC

Scott R. Isaacks, Director and CEO
Ralph H. Johnson VA Medical Center

Lorraine Lutton, President and CEO
Roper St. Francis Healthcare

Congressman Mark Sanford
U.S. House of Representatives

Senator Sean M. Bennett
South Carolina Senate

Senator Paul G. Campbell, Jr.
South Carolina Senate

Senator Chip Campsen
South Carolina Senate

Representative Katie Arrington
South Carolina House of Representatives

Representative William Cogswell, Jr.
South Carolina House of Representatives

Patrick Arnold, Executive Director
Charleston Home Builders Association

Charleston Trident Association of REALTORS

Winslow Hastie, President and CEO
Historic Charleston Foundation

Mayor John Tecklenburg
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Mike Seekings
Charleston City Council

Mayor Tim Goodwin
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