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**Committee on Homeland Security**

**Subcommittee on Emergency Preparedness, Response and Recovery**

**“Protecting Every Citizen: Assessing Emergency Preparedness for Underserved Populations”**

### **Introduction**

Thank you Chairman Thompson, Ranking Member King, and members of this Subcommittee for holding this hearing today. I am Dorian Herrell, the Coordinator of the office of Emergency Management Homeland Security and Preparedness for the City of Newark, New Jersey. I am honored to be here to address the concerns of emergency preparedness for the needs of the underserved populations in an emergency.

As we examine the concerns surrounding the underserved population during an emergency I want to first commend the responders of my jurisdiction for their dedication and due diligence in collaborating with partners, training and exercises for greater enhanced capabilities. I will direct my attention to the concerns of emergency preparedness and the civilians that fall within the underserved population, the children, low income individuals and those with access and functional needs. I feel the following actions are critical to managing the responsibility of planning for our vulnerable groups.

Firstly; **Outreach:** - The populations at risk must be involved within the planning process so that they can be aware of the threats that are under way and become more knowledgeable about what is expected of them under these conditions. The community needs to know what is likely to happen in a disaster and what emergency organizations that may have available and/or immediate resources in assisting. The Community Emergency Response Team (**CERT**) training is a free program designed to educate citizens about how to prepare for emergencies that might impact their area and trains them in basic disaster preparedness skills, such as fire safety, light search and rescue and disaster medical operations. CERT members are vital to a community in time of crisis, especially when professional responders are not immediately available. Also, in creating a better informed and prepared community, by providing information through social media, as well as schedule speakers to discuss Emergency Preparedness will help citizens in being better prepared. Seminars and/or presentations are free of charge and are conducted year round during day and evening hours.

**Training:** Emergency drills and exercises provide a setting in which the adequacy of the Emergency Operations Plan. Multifunctional exercises also produce publicity for the broader emergency management process, which informs community leaders and the public that disaster planning is under way and preparedness is being enhanced.

**Resources:** FEMA - Get Ready Now - is a guide on how to plan and prepare to protect your family in the event of any emergency. It instructs you how to build an emergency survival kit. This guide also speaks on Disabled and Special Needs Citizens, Senior Citizens, and Hurricane survival guidelines. With an Emergency Alert System in place to notify the community of emergencies is essential.

The support received from the State and Federal Government is vital and greatly appreciated. However, by increasing funding into these much needed communities, will help expand awareness throughout the city and state and with having an adequate stock-pile of supplies readily to serve the community in the event of a major, natural, man-made disaster or terrorist incident is paramount.

I would like to thank you for your attention and time and look forward to answering any questions you may have.