September 17, 2018

The Honorable William B. “Brock” Long
Administrator
Federal Emergency Management Agency
500 C Street S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20472

Dear Administrator Long:

On behalf of the more than 400,000 members of the American Bar Association (ABA), I am pleased to inform you that the ABA passed a resolution (linked) regarding planning for intimate partner and sexual violence during a disaster. Millions of Americans are currently in the path of Hurricane Florence as it ravages the east coast. Thousands more will certainly be impacted by wildfires, flooding, and other disasters in the coming months. When a person is evacuated to the same shelter as their abuser, or when intimate partner violence (IPV) and sexual violence occur inside a shelter, emergency management agencies and other important stakeholders like the American Red Cross must be prepared for how to handle those eventualities. Victims of IPV and sexual violence are uniquely vulnerable in the aftermath of a disaster when their housing has been destroyed and their support networks have been scattered.

The ABA’s resolution addresses this important public safety issue by urging federal, state, local, tribal and territorial emergency management agencies to provide proper training to staff and volunteers to respond to the unique needs of intimate partner violence (IPV) and sexual violence victims during and after a disaster. The resolution also urges Congress to appropriate funds to the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) for training and education for emergency management personnel and disaster relief shelter personnel regarding IPV and sexual violence.

We look to FEMA for leadership to help ensure that victims of IPV and sexual violence are safe when a disaster strikes. The ABA and its Young Lawyers Division (YLD), which runs the Disaster Legal Services program and has cooperated extensively with FEMA in the past, stands ready to continue to assist in the future.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact David Eppstein in the ABA Governmental Affairs Office at david.eppstein@americanbar.org.

Sincerely,

Robert M. Carlson