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**Human Rights Commission Urges Residents
To Extend Helping Hand in Wake of Hurricanes**

Monticello, NY – Two American territories were hit by Hurricane Irma and Hurricane Maria within two weeks of each other, and both Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands experienced extreme devastation. More than 3.5 million United States citizens are currently suffering apocalyptic conditions, and many people in Sullivan County have relatives and friends who are affected.

The needs of these citizens require immediate attention and unified efforts to help through the donation of money and/or necessary items. Basic supplies required for day-to-day existence include bottled water, canned food, can openers, baby formula, baby bottles with nipples, diapers for children and adults, baby wipes, first aid supplies, feminine hygiene products, Clorox wipes, soaps, toothpaste, tooth brushes, bug spray, and other non-perishables. Portable items such as flashlights, radios, etc., will require an ongoing supply of fresh batteries.

“Let us remind Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands that they are not alone, and offer them hope and substance,” said Ari Mir-Pontier, executive director of the Sullivan County Human Rights Commission. “If you love people, then this is the time to share your love of humanity. Let this be your opportunity to make a tremendous difference in the lives of many fellow Americans. It is up to us to help those who have lost so much.”

Residents are encouraged to visit Town Clerk’s offices throughout Sullivan County to donate items described above. UNICEF and the Salvation Army are just two organizations accepting monetary donations to help in Puerto Rico relief efforts. The Community Foundation of the Virgin Islands is providing relief assistance for the islands of St. Croix, St. Thomas, and St. John.

County Legislature Chairman Luis Alvarez also noted that NYS Governor Andrew Cuomo has launched the Empire State Relief and Recovery Effort for Puerto Rico. The effort brings together a wide range of civic, business and industry partners to provide needed services, goods and funds to help the people of Puerto Rico recover and rebuild, and provides opportunities for New Yorkers to contribute to the relief efforts. Attorney General Eric Schneiderman's Charities Bureau will monitor the effort so as to ensure fiscal propriety. JetBlue has committed \$1 million as an in-kind contribution to transport the customers and cargo for relief efforts.

A full list of charitable organizations for financial contributions is available at ny.gov/PuertoRico.

“I thank Governor Cuomo, the Sullivan County Human Rights Commission, the local town clerks, various aid groups and so many individuals for putting out a call for help,” stated Alvarez, who grew up in Puerto Rico and has family there. “Just as we’ve done for Texans, Louisianians and Floridians impacted by Hurricanes Harvey and Irma, we will not ignore Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands in their time of desperate need.”