>> Congressman Langevin: Thank you very much, good afternoon and my apologies that votes and other meetings kept me from getting on the Zoom earlier. I just want to say what a beautiful speech the person who just spoke before me, just gave. What a moving, powerful speech and congratulations on great remarks. You spoke for many people.

Let me just say good afternoon, I want to recognize Shaylin and Germán for that nice introduction and for having me here today. It's great to see so many people here to learn more about this important issue and expanding and strengthening the rights of people with disabilities to create a more open and inclusive society.

As was mentioned, I'm Congressman Jim Langevin. I proudly represent the second congressional district in Rhode Island. A seat I've held now going on 22 years.

Before we get started, I just want to begin by thanking The Partnership for Inclusive Disaster Strategies for organizing this briefing and for bringing together so many just great minds to help us better understand the need for inclusive disaster relief.

I have to say I have work closely with The Partnership for several years and I really do commend them for their work to make people with disabilities and older adults a forethought, rather than an afterthought in disaster management.

Just so important that we think about the needs of people with disabilities ahead of time and the planning stages and before the disasters happened, rather than during the disasters, trying to figure this out on the fly or after the fact.

Yet you know, we, this organization does even more than that, when disaster strikes, The Partnership burns the candle at both ends to offer support to impacted communities and to make sure that needs are met for as many people as possible.

And let me just say, I greatly admire their work and I think it's very, really, it's very impressive, but you know, I'd like to make something very clear. And that’s supporting people with disabilities and older adults, before, during and after disasters, shouldn't fall under organizations like The Partnership.

This is the government's responsibility, primarily. And you know, we need to retool and refocus and make sure we're pressuring government and putting policies in place to make sure that is the needs of people with disabilities, the governments are meeting those needs.

Time and time again, preventable tragedies happen because of failures and disaster management at the federal, state, and the local levels. The status quo is unacceptable and without intervention, more people with disabilities and older adults will suffer unnecessarily when disasters strike.

That's why we urgently need to pass legislation like the REAADI for Disasters Act and the Disaster Relief Medicaid Act. So the REAADI for Disasters Act would give people with disabilities and older adults a seat at the table when planning is taking place and it would promote the development of inclusive disaster preparedness, response, recovery and mitigation plans.

The Disaster Relief Medicaid Act would ensure that relocated disaster survivors who rely on Medicaid waivers for critical, life‑sustaining services, maintain access to their coverage, even when they're relocating to states with more‑restrictive Medicaid programs.

It's really important distinction. You know, if someone is evacuated from one state to another and you know, they have the supports in place in one state, but it’s not necessarily guaranteed because it’s so state‑centric, that those same programs and supports will be in existence and accessible at another state.

We need to make that seamless so that when someone with a disability receives Medicaid services, if they're relocated to another area, that they still maintain their current level of support.

I'm so proud to lead the REAADI for Disasters Act with Representatives Jimmy Panetta, Albio Sires, and Chris Smith, and to co-lead the Disaster Relief Medicaid Act with Representative Panetta. Great colleagues, bipartisan, and really important effort. I'm also very grateful for Senator Bob Casey's leadership on both of these bills in the Senate. Bob's a good friend and we applaud his leadership in the Senate.

We really need to get these bills over the finish line and I appreciate all of your support. It's how we can make this difference and make this happen together.

I'll leave it to today's presenters to fill you in on the specific details of these bills in more detail. But after today's event, if you have any questions or would like to sign on as a cosponsor of the House version of the REAADI for Disasters Act, please don't hesitate to contact my office. You know, we're in this together. And the more we can collaborate and push members and educate members and staff about the importance of these bills, the more likely we can get more and more cosponsors and get it to the House and Senate floors respectively and then we want to get it to the President's desk ASAP.

So with that I just want to thank everyone again for attending the briefing and Shaylin and Germán I’ll turn it back over to you. Thank you.

>>​ Germán: Muchas gracias Congressman Langevin