

Testimony of David A. French

ReBuildNC Debacle: Williams-French: The Dire, The Disastrous & Deadly Effects of ReBuildNC!

Submitted To The Joint Legislative Commission on Governmental Operations
Subcommittee on Hurricane Response and Recovery Committee Meeting
Wednesday, January 29, 2025

Good Afternoon Sen. Jackson, Rep. Jones, Other Sub-Committee Members,
Elected Officials, and The Media,

I would prefer to be there in person to testify before you all because you all need to see the people who are suffering and understand our situations up close. I thank you for allowing me to submit a statement for the committee record that meets tomorrow, Thursday, January 20, 2025 at 8:30 a.m. You all have my permission to share it publicly about **The Dire, The Disastrous & Deadly Effects of ReBuildNC** has had and is having upon me and had on my now deceased Cousin Marianne and the thousands of others who no doubt have suffered similar or worse things at the hands of the former Gov. Cooper, the former/current Sec. Buffaloe, the incompetent and now removed Dir. Hogshead and her henchman and now removed Matt Arlyn who inflicted upon us daily STRESS and HARM for **OVER FOUR LONG YEARS!**

I pray daily for all of us here in ENC that we will be able to go home soon and for all those in WNC and in California that they will not have to wait the EIGHT and SIX LONG YEARS as we are doing due solely to the entrenched bureaucratic thuggery.

The ReBuildNC program is BROKEN and has been broken since its inception due to poor design and terrible execution of a failed plan. This was confirmed by Colonel Sanderson, who led the successful disaster recovery program in South Carolina, when he testified before you some years ago all giving the ReBuildNC program **a grade of F!**

Hogshead and her cohorts have **REPEATEDLY LIED** to you all both in the public hearings as well as in private communications. They **LIED** to Joe Coletti about our stipend. There is no one there to rebut their lies. This is why it is of vital importance to have the survivors testify before you! There should have been a

Hurricane Survivors Council set up from the very beginning. ReBuildNC did not want this and I was told they even tried to have our independent Facebook Hurricane Survivor group(s) shut down!

There are absolutely no internal controls at NCORR/ReBuildNC to make sure it is being run properly. Mr. Gibson was supposed to fix it, but very sadly, he did not. Why isn't Mr. Richard Trumper being made the head of NCORR/ReBuildNC since he has actual construction experience and led the successful hurricane survivors' home restoration/rebuilding program at the NC Office of Management and Budget?

As was recently suggested to handle the California disaster, maybe a Special Master needs to be appointed so that the taxpayer funds actually go to benefit the people affected rather than groups and companies who really do nothing for us. MILLIONS have been spent on so-called "consultants" for ReBuildNC that did not do one good thing for us! Who are actually the decision makers at NCORR/ReBuildNC now that Hogshead and Arlyn have been removed? What is the organizational structure? What are their names, functions, and how much are they each being paid with taxpayer funds?

What you all may not realize is that ReBuildNC's absolute failure has had **PERSONAL** and **VERY STRESSFUL EFFECTS** upon each of us in the program. I could write many paragraphs about each of the items below of how ReBuildNC messed up at every point along the way, but I am trying to be brief.

I would welcome the opportunity to testify before the committee in person in the very near future as I know would many other survivors. On September 14, 2022, we made our written statement to the NC Hurricane Response & Recovery Subcommittee Hearing which is available via this link below with much stress and harm happening to us since then because of ReBuildNC. <https://ncleg.gov/Committees/CommitteeInfo/NonStanding/152/Documents/12578>. Watching and hearing what other people had suffered at the hands of the incompetent Cooper, Buffaloe, Hogshead, Arlyn, and their cohorts was heart wrenching to say the least! As was promised in that first hearing, there must be **PUBLIC HEARINGS AT LEAST EVERY THREE MONTHS GOING FORWARD!**

ReBuildNC's broken promises have caused the following to my Cousin Marianne and me over the past FOUR VERY LONG YEARS!

One, the continued broken promises of restoring and/or rebuilding and elevating our home in a timely manner! LIES UPON LIES UPON LIES!

Two, the extreme financial HARDSHIP, emotional and mental DAILY STRESS of being out of our home for six years of which ReBuildNC is directly responsible for the last four years! We have had to pay property insurance, taxes, and upkeep on a home that we cannot live in! I have been living out of boxes and bags for **over SIX LONG YEARS!**

Three, the repeated threats of being kicked out of the program because we went to our elected officials and the media EXPOSING the **INCOMPETENCE, MISMANAGEMENT**, and **NEGLIGENCE** of Cooper, Buffaloe, Hogshead, Arlyn, and their cohorts! You can read the article by Luciana via this link that prompted the latest threat of me being kicked out of the ReBuildNC program. <https://www.newsobserver.com/news/politics-government/article294900559.html>.

How many other people who desperately needed the help have been kicked out of the program because they did not know how to fight back against the bureaucratic thuggery of ReBuildNC?! There needs to be an independent third party **PROCESS AUDIT** of ALL the ReBuildNC Applications and those who were kicked out need to be evaluated and brought back in! There needs to be an independent third party **FORENSIC AUDIT** of all the taxpayers funds including to whom paid and for what with supporting documentation from the beginning to present. **No one should be kicked out of the program or have their stipends reduced while there is an ongoing Federal Investigation into NCORR/ReBuildNC!**

Four, the **DEATH of my dear Cousin Marianne** in October 2022 who had to move three times until we found a place back in New Bern after Hurricane Florence was one of the saddest days of my life. While I did my best to shield her from the stress of it all, it took its toll on her. All she ever wanted to do was go back home and enjoy the rest of her life, but was not able to do so because of the absolute failure of ReBuildNC! **The stress of it all contributed to her early and unexpected passing.**

Five, the repeated **LIES** of Hogshead, Arlyn, and their cohorts and their refusal to have a sit down in person meeting with me over the past four years! They should

be charged for their crimes against us! **Not one ReBuildNC official came to look at the inside of our home until January 16, 2025** when I insisted that Michael Cullen of ReBuildNC along with Sen. Brinson, Rep. Tyson, and Joe Coletti look at it! ReBuildNC has been making decisions about our home and property for which they have no real knowledge and experience!

Six, the threat of **EVICTION** at my old apartment because ReBuildNC did not pay the rent which was continually late.

Seven, the **LATE** and **MISSED** stipend payments at my current apartment! This has had a **DIRE AND DISASTROUS** effect upon me. I have had to borrow money from family and friends to be able to pay my rent. I am due stipend payments for both December 2024 and January 2025 which still have not been received! I am now faced with being **EVICTED** yet again! My gas heat bill was over \$200.00 which I cannot pay along with other bills. I would have NEVER needed one red cent of Temporary Relocation Assistance had ReBuildNC done their job! I had to insist they not spend an estimated \$5,000.00 a month for Pods.com and keep our belongings in the fixed place storage at a cost of \$495.00 per month. **I have saved the ReBuildNC program over \$130,000.00 by insisting on common sense!**

Eight, I just received a letter that NCORR/ReBuildNC is cutting the stipend almost in HALF! I was barely making it with what they were sending before! This is **UNACCEPTABLE!** You all must direct them to continue the stipend payments at the **FULL AMOUNT PROMISED!** The State of NC has a budget surplus so the people of ENC need the assistance now from this rainy day fund! Another way to get the money is to revoke the \$18 MILLION TAXPAYER Funded Contract with Hunt, Guillot and Associates LLC and investigate them for failure to properly perform. They are getting \$18 Million to basically write checks which they have proven they cannot do and send in a timely manner! <https://www.rebuild.nc.gov/hga-19-rfp-464735590-dad-staff-augmentation-executed-contract/open> We will not be punished for their INCOMPETENCE! **I MUST HAVE MY FULL STIPEND PAYMENTS OVERNIGHTED TO ME NOW!**

ALL OF THE ABOVE IS 100% THE FAULT OF NCORR/REBUILDNC!

Nine, **THE SOLUTION** as we stated in September 2022 and also was reiterated to me by Richard Trumper when he was brought on to advise ReBuildNC in 2023

is that ReBuildNC MUST switch to the **INSURANCE MODEL!** He said ReBuildNC REFUSED to do it. They must be FORCED to do it now! I couldn't care less about some insane and crazy HUD guidelines! ReBuildNC has bent and broken many HUD guidelines over the years!

The Insurance Model would solve many problems and issues. Place the amount of the award into an escrow account and let the Hurricane Homeowner Survivors hire their own competent and licensed local builders and general contractors to restore and/or rebuild their homes keeping the money in the local communities rather than enriching companies many of whom are based outside North Carolina. There are almost 1,000 outstanding issues with poor workmanship with the homes done by ReBuildNC so far and homeowners are getting the runaround from ReBuildNC, the general contractors, and their subcontractors. We really do not know the true numbers of anything with regard to NCORR/ReBuildNC! UNACCEPTABLE!

I think we need to have **President Trump** step in here to cut through all the BS like he has done in WNC and California. He told the Mayor of LA that one week was too long to wait for the people to go back! What will he say and do when he finds out that some of us have been **WAITING EIGHT AND SIX LONG YEARS?!** This MUST be brought to his attention NOW! **He can and will do something to help us!** HUD is as corrupt and mismanaged as FEMA is! **NCORR/ReBuildNC** has **MISUSED** Federal Taxpayer Bucks to the DETRIMENT of me, my deceased Cousin Marianne, and thousands of other Hurricane Flood Homeowner Survivors! They have committed **FRAUD** of which there is no statute of limitations and all those involved can be sued in their official, professional, and personal capacities!

Ten, It is said that the two most **STRESSFUL** things in life are losing a loved one and moving. I have **LOST FOUR CLOSE LOVED ONES** since Hurricane Florence hit us in 2018 and I have **MOVED FIVE TIMES!** You all do the math at where my stress level is and how my patience is at an end with the bureaucratic thuggery of NCORR/ReBuildNC!

We have only made it this far with the help of our family and friends; our elected officials and staff like Rep. Steve Tyson, Sen. Bob Brinson, and Joe Coletti; the investigative and professional journalists Lisa Sorg, Luciana Perez Uribe Guinassi, and Cristin Severance; and most importantly our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ who has made a way every time when it looked like there was no way!

I will not go away until NCORR/ReBuildNC has fulfilled the promise that they made to my DECEASED Cousin Marianne and me to restore and/or rebuild and elevate our home to meet all local, state, and federal guidelines! As President Trump told the people in WNC and California, we should build their homes back bigger and better than what they were before! I think he would say the same for ENC!

Sincerely,

David A. French

In Memory of My Dear Cousin Marianne D. Williams (1938-2022), A Stroke and Hurricane Florence Flood Survivor Who Sadly Was Never Able to Return to her Beloved Homeplace due solely to the Incompetence, Mismanagement, and Negligence of NCORR/ReBuildNC.