



July 26, 2017

House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Representative,

On behalf of the 650 national religious institutions and local faith communities that make up Jubilee USA, I urge you to act quickly to implement recommendations of the bipartisan Congressional Task Force on Economic Growth in Puerto Rico. In particular, Puerto Rico needs equitable access to federal healthcare programs and tax credits. These recommendations are essential for reducing poverty for nearly 60% of kids who live in poverty on the island.

We are grateful that Congress included \$295 million for Puerto Rico's Medicaid program included in the 2017 Omnibus spending bill. This action was an important stopgap in avoiding an immediate funding shortfall, but 900,000 American citizens in Puerto Rico remain at risk of losing healthcare coverage if Congress does not finance Puerto Rico's Medicaid and Medicare programs.

A higher proportion of Puerto Rico's population relies on Medicaid than in the 50 US States. Disparity in coverage drives doctors and residents to move from the island to one of the States. Federal funding for Puerto Rico's Medicaid program should mimic coverage for citizens who live in the States, utilizing the same formula to determine the share of federal funding and including no cap on the amount of federal funding.

Similarly, citizens in Puerto Rico's Medicare program should receive the same benefits and coverage as other citizens. This includes an automatic opt-in to Medicare Part B to avoid late-enrollment penalties. The elimination of matching requirement that limits use of Medicaid funds to cover the prescription drug costs of Puerto Rico's Medicare enrollees is important.

I further urge you to extend the federal Child Tax Credit to Puerto Rico families with one or two children in Puerto Rico and the Earned Income Tax Credit. The Child Tax Credit protects children who are at risk of falling into poverty, and it would pump nearly \$3 billion into Puerto Rico's economy over the next decade. The Earned Income Tax Credit can increase labor force participation and reduce child poverty; it can be a much needed anti-poverty tool for low-income families on the island.

We are grateful for your public service and attention to these issues. We hold you and your colleagues in our prayers.

Gratefully,

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Executive Director

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Building an economy that serves, protects and promotes participation of the most vulnerable