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May 4, 2020

The Honorable Frank Pallone, Jr.
Chairman
House Committee on Energy and Commerce
2322 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Greg Walden
Ranking Member
House Committee on Energy and Commerce
2322 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Pallone and Ranking Member Walden:

Equally American strongly supports the Insular Area Medicaid Parity Act (H.R. 6495), which eliminates the general Medicaid funding limitations for territories of the United States.

Equally American is a non-partisan civil rights group that fights to advance equality for the nearly 4 million Americans living in U.S. territories. Our values are centered on the basic principle that all Americans should have equal rights and representation, wherever they live.

Section 1108 of the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. 1308) arbitrarily discriminates against Americans who would otherwise qualify for Medicaid but for their residency in Puerto Rico, the Virgin Islands, Guam, the Northern Mariana Islands, and American Samoa. This categorical exclusion is not rationally related to a legitimate government interest and unjustly excludes members of the very class of individuals whom the Medicaid program was designed to serve—*i.e.*, eligible low-income adults, children, pregnant women, elderly adults, and people with disabilities. The Insular Area Medicaid Parity Act would fix this inequity, enabling some of America's most vulnerable residents to access the Medicaid benefits they need and deserve.

Enclosed is an Op-Ed I recently wrote entitled "The Constitution, COVID-19, and Growing Healthcare Disparities in U.S. Territories" that explains the troubling origins of this "separate and unequal" status and what Congress and the courts should do to remedy this injustice.

There is no rational basis for discriminating against residents of the territories, especially considering the risks that COVID-19 has placed on these communities. Americans living in the territories should have equal rights to those living in New Jersey, Oregon, or any other part of the United States. We therefore ask that the Committee on Energy and Commerce approve the Insular Area Medicaid Parity Act at its earliest convenience.

Sincerely,

Neil Weare
President and Founder