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February 5, 2021

The Honorable Richard E. Neal
Chairman
Committee on Ways and Means
1102 Longworth House Office Building
Washington DC 20515

The Honorable Kevin Brady
Ranking Member
Committee on Ways and Means
1139 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Neal and Ranking Member Brady:

Equally American strongly supports H.R. 537, which will extend the Supplemental Security Income (SSI) program to Puerto Rico, the Virgin Islands, Guam, and American Samoa.

Equally American fights to advance equality and civil rights for the 4 million U.S. citizens living in American Samoa, Guam, the Northern Mariana Islands, Puerto Rico, and the Virgin Islands - 98% of whom are racial or ethnic minorities. Our values are centered on the basic principle that all Americans should have equal rights and representation, wherever they live.

As you know, the SSI program supports disabled, blind, and low-income adults and children throughout the fifty states, the District of Columbia, and the Northern Mariana Islands. But otherwise-eligible citizens living in Puerto Rico, Guam, the Virgin Islands, and American Samoa are arbitrarily precluded from receiving SSI. That is not just unfair, it is unconstitutional. In *United States v. Vaello Madero*, the First Circuit recently struck down this statutory discrimination as a violation of equal protection, concluding that “[t]he categorical exclusion of otherwise eligible . . . residents from SSI is not rationally related to a legitimate government interest.” The United States has sought review of the First Circuit’s landmark decision before the U.S. Supreme Court. But Congress should not wait for the courts to deliver relief to the otherwise eligible Americans who are arbitrarily excluded from the SSI program.

Congress can, and should, enable otherwise eligible disabled, blind, and low-income adults and children in Puerto Rico, Guam, the Virgin Islands, and American Samoa to access the SSI benefits they need and deserve. We therefore urge the Committee on Ways and Means to report favorably on H.R. 537 at the earliest practicable date.

Sincerely,

Neil Weare
President and Founder