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October 12, 2021

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Charles Schumer
Majority Leader
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Speaker Pelosi and Senate Majority Leader Schumer:

I write to ask that as Congress finalizes the FY2022 Budget Reconciliation package that you act on President Biden's [request](#) to finally extend parity in the Supplemental Security Income (SSI) program to U.S. citizens in Puerto Rico and other territories. As President Biden [said](#) in June, citizens in the territories "should be able to receive SSI benefits, just like their fellow Americans in all 50 states and Washington D.C." Simply put, as President Biden made clear, "there can be no second-class citizens in the United States of America."

Next month, the U.S. Supreme Court will consider whether the denial of SSI benefits to residents of Puerto Rico and other territories violates the Constitution's guarantee of equal protection. But waiting for the Supreme Court to act would be a mistake, and not just because it would be risky to gamble on the Court's decision. Whether or not it is unconstitutional to deny otherwise eligible U.S. citizens access to SSI based solely on where they happen to live, it is clearly unconscionable. It is immoral that citizens in the territories are left out of what is in effect the safety net of last resort for millions of the most vulnerable Americans.

This is not a partisan issue. In [recent polls](#) a majority of Democrats, Republicans, and Independents support expanding SSI to U.S. territories through the next budget bill.

While citizens in Puerto Rico and other territories cannot vote, the nearly six million Puerto Ricans living in the states can – [including](#) 1.2 million Puerto Ricans in Florida, almost half a million in Pennsylvania, and 350 thousand combined in Ohio, North Carolina, and Georgia. The territorial diaspora in these swing states will surely ask candidates and parties seeking their votes what they did – *or did not do* – when they had the chance to deliver on promises like extending SSI benefits to residents of Puerto Rico and the territories.

Now is the time for Congress to act to end this longstanding injustice.

Sincerely,

Neil Weare
President and Founder