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March 23, 2020

Dear Member of Congress:

As you continue to focus on efforts to help all Americans face the COVID-19 public health and economic crisis, we want to take a moment to bring to your attention the unique circumstances of Puerto Rico. LULAC reaffirms its strong support to ensure our fellow American citizens who reside in the island are not left behind.

Given Puerto Rico's crumbling healthcare infrastructure and aging population at greater risk of complications, the spread of this virus could result in an unprecedented human catastrophe. As of March 15th, the island has [eight confirmed cases](#) of COVID-19, but with the alarmingly fast rate that the virus is spreading, it is very likely there are even more people infected. With one-fifth of the population over the age of 65 and with underlying conditions, the fast spread of COVID-19 is a terrifying proposition.

Over the last three years, Puerto Rico has been hit by a series of natural disasters--hurricanes Maria and Irma, ongoing earthquakes, and now, the COVID-19 pandemic. These disasters have exacerbated an economic crisis, created by decades of budget cuts and neglect, that has left the island with \$129 billion in debt and a crumbling infrastructure. Simply put the Puerto Rican infrastructure and overall public systems are not prepared to handle a public health disaster.

The federal government has failed to disburse billions of dollars allocated toward a just recovery to Puerto Rico in the aftermath of Hurricane Maria. Recent earthquakes have compounded Puerto Rico's distress. Estimated damages reported by hardest-hit local governments on the island exceed \$1.4 billion, and the power authority needs significant investment to rebuild one of its main power plants by this summer in order to stabilize service for millions.

For these reasons we call on Congress to:

- Direct the Financial Oversight and Management Board (FOMB) to allow the Government of Puerto Rico to use the more than \$9 billion in funds destined for debt payments to instead be used to support Puerto Rican families in this moment of crisis;
- Ensure free testing and healthcare services;
- Institute a moratorium on evictions, foreclosures, and utility shutoffs;
- Ensure everyone has access to food;
- Provide school children with the tools necessary to continue their education from home and;



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- Make significant investments in clean, local, sustainable energy sources to stabilize service for millions.

We must prioritize these critical investments in the public health and safety of Puerto Ricans over debt repayments.

Thank you in advance for your support.

Together We Rise,

Domingo Garcia
LULAC National President

Sindy M. Benavides
LULAC Chief Executive Officer