Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

March 4th, 2016

The Honorable Pedro Pierluisi
U.S. House of Representatives
2410 Rayburn HOB
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Resident Commissioner Pierluisi,

As Members of the Florida Congressional delegation, we write to support your efforts to bring real relief to our 3.5 million fellow American citizens in Puerto Rico.

As you know, Florida is home to over one million individuals of Puerto Rican birth or descent, more than double the population in 2000. In 2014 alone, an estimated 84,000 individuals moved from Puerto Rico to the states, with 28,000 taking up residence in Florida. While we welcome those who relocate from Puerto Rico with open arms and deeply value their contributions to our state, they should not be forced to leave their homes and their families due to a rapidly deteriorating economic and health care situation.

Due to the economic conditions of the island, Puerto Ricans disproportionately qualify for government healthcare programs; however, historical inequities in Medicare and Medicaid reimbursement rates have translated into fewer doctors and reduced access to health care. Combined with the prospect of crippling austerity to attempt to address the fiscal situation, this one-two punch threatens to create a humanitarian crisis on the island.

It is worth noting that in 2015, total healthcare spending per capita in Puerto Rico was approximately $3,400 – well below the national average of about $10,000. This substantial disparity exists despite Puerto Rico having much higher rates of poverty and chronic conditions than almost anywhere in the United States. In fact, a significant portion of this underfunding is the result of disparities between how Medicare and Medicaid funding is allocated. For example, Medicare beneficiaries in Puerto Rico do not receive the Medicare Part D Prescription Drug Program Low-Income Subsidy (LIS). This shortsighted inequity leads to lower rates of medication adherence and more spending down the road. Additionally, Puerto Rico has sustained the highest level of Medicare Advantage (MA) cuts of any area in the nation. This is particularly worrisome given that 75 percent of eligible seniors in Puerto Rico choose an MA plan versus 30 percent nationally. All of this comes on top of the looming Medicaid funding "cliff" that threatens further significant cuts. That is why we share your belief that addressing health inequities along with fairness in debt restructuring authority are keys to a sustainable path forward.

For the 3.5 million Americans living in Puerto Rico, congressional inaction will make an unsustainable situation worse. On behalf of the one million Puerto Ricans who call Florida home, we will continue to stand with you to comprehensively address the emergency in Puerto Rico.

Sincerely,

Patrick Murphy

Patrick E. Murphy
MEMBER OF CONGRESS

Corrine Brown

Corrine Brown
MEMBER OF CONGRESS

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Lois Frankel
MEMBER OF CONGRESS

Gwen Graham
MEMBER OF CONGRESS

cc: The Honorable Nancy Pelosi, Democratic Leader, U.S. House of Representatives
The Honorable Steny Hoyer, Democratic Whip, U.S. House of Representatives