

JENNIFFER GONZÁLEZ-COLÓN
PUERTO RICO, AT LARGE

WASHINGTON OFFICE:
1609 LONGWORTH HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING
(202) 225-6215 FAX: (202) 225-2154

SAN JUAN OFFICE:
157 AVENIDA DE LA CONSTITUCIÓN
ANTIGUO EDIFICIO DE MEDICINA TROPICAL
SEGUNDO PISO
SAN JUAN, PUERTO RICO 00901
(787) 723-6333 FAX: (787) 729-7738



COMMITTEES:
TRANSPORTATION & INFRASTRUCTURE
SUBCOMMITTEES
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, PUBLIC BUILDINGS AND
EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT
WATER RESOURCES AND ENVIRONMENT

NATURAL RESOURCES
SUBCOMMITTEES
WATER, OCEANS AND WILDLIFE
OVERSIGHT AND INVESTIGATIONS

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-5400

March 22, 2020

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Majority Leader
U.S. Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Chuck Schumer
Minority Leader
U.S. Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

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

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy
Minority Leader
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Majority Leader McConnell, Minority Leader Schumer, Speaker Pelosi, and Minority Leader McCarthy:

As you continue negotiations for provisions that will be included in additional disaster assistance legislation due to the COVID-19 emergency, I respectfully request you prioritize additional funding for Puerto Rico's Nutrition Assistance Program (NAP). As currently written, the amended Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act released today does not address the needs of NAP beneficiaries in Puerto Rico.

As you are aware, Puerto Rico does not participate in the national Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, known as SNAP. Instead, the Island distributes food benefits through NAP, a capped block grant that is typically funded at \$1.9 billion each year and has over 1.3 million participants. NAP beneficiaries receive close to 50% less benefits than their SNAP counterparts. Additionally, they do not have access to disaster nutrition assistance, like Disaster-SNAP, which allows beneficiaries the maximum allotment of benefits per household in the aftermath of a disaster.

Puerto Rico recently experienced multiple natural disasters, starting with hurricane Maria in 2017. Since then, Congress has worked on a bipartisan manner to allocate additional funding for NAP to assist constituents that lost their jobs or saw their work hours significantly reduced during the post-hurricane recovery period. Most notably, Section 309 of Public Law 115-72, allocated \$1.27 billion for NAP. This resulted in greater food security for beneficiaries, an increase in program participation and an increase in benefits, which provided great relief and had a positive impact on economic recovery.

Unfortunately, we are now in a similar position with the COVID-19 pandemic. Due to curfews and other measures that promote social distancing, the Island's economy will be severely impacted. Furthermore, many will see their jobs or hours compromised. I therefore respectfully urge you to increase NAP funding to include \$1.27 billion to remain available for beneficiaries as we work through this emergency.

Please keep in mind that, while I appreciate the funding and assistance being provided for SNAP beneficiaries, these do not apply nor have an impact on Puerto Rico. I also recognize the importance of the recent allocation of \$100 million for nutrition assistance for Puerto Rico, American Samoa and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, included in Public Law 116-127. However, this amount is not commensurate with need. In a single month, Puerto Rico emissions for NAP are above \$152 million, exemplifying the need for additional funds if we are to have a lasting impact for Puerto Rico and the Island's economy during these critical times.

I appreciate your attention to this urgent matter and the work you and your staff are undertaking to better position the American people to face this pandemic.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Jenniffer González-Colón". The signature is stylized and cursive.

Jenniffer González-Colón
Member of Congress