

INTRODUCTION

Four years ago, we could not have imagined the devastation and marginalization that our beloved Puerto Rico would endure. Hurricanes in the Caribbean are nothing new, but Hurricane Maria's ferocity—super-powered by the realities of climate change—exposed the vulnerability of an island with a decaying energy infrastructure, a weak social safety-net, an unfair relationship with the United States, and a profound financial crisis.

Take Action for Puerto Rico! continues to bring together people and organizations to raise awareness, stimulate collaboration, and take action around critical issues for Puerto Rico's recovery: empowered citizenship, ending disparities in social safety net programs, ensuring federal aid under the Biden Administration continues to flow, and economic redevelopment. So many of us want to help, and the goal of the *Take Action for Puerto Rico!* campaign is to productively channel our energy to achieve maximum impact for Puerto Ricans living on the island and for those displaced by natural and human-caused disasters.

Take Action for Puerto Rico! kicks-off as we reach the four-year mark of Hurricane Maria on September 20th and continues until significant parity for Puerto Rico is achieved. The *Take Action for Puerto Rico!* Toolkit has the information and materials that you need to be an effective agent of change for Puerto Rico.

Choose the areas that speak to you, about which you are the most passionate, and deliver the message that Puerto Rico deserves better:

- **Health Care Equity:** Puerto Rico receives far less funding for federal health care programs than other U.S. jurisdictions. Specifically, the federal share for Medicaid is artificially capped at a much lower rate than states, and Puerto Rican Medicare patients are excluded from the low-income prescription drug subsidy for seniors. Puerto Rico faces a drop in federal Medicaid funding this year when a temporary [federal funding boost is set to expire](#). In addition, the people of Puerto Rico are excluded from receiving Social Supplemental Income benefits (SSI) available to elderly, disabled, and blind Americans in all 50 states and the District of Columbia due to years of discrimination against U.S. citizens who live in Puerto Rico. In 2020, the First Circuit in Boston ruled in the [case of Vaello-Madero](#) that it was unconstitutional to discriminate against residents of Puerto Rico by denying SSI benefits. In 2021, the Biden administration decided not to withdraw the government appeal submitted by the Trump administration. As a result, the case is going to be [reviewed by the Supreme Court](#).
- **Ensure federal aid under the Biden Administration continues to flow:** *The Take Action for Puerto Rico!* Toolkit provides useful background information about how the federal government responded differently to the natural disasters in Puerto Rico compared with its response to other natural disasters, how the Trump administration intentionally withheld money appropriated by Congress for recovery, updated information about how federal funds have been allocated, obligated, and spent by the government of Puerto Rico, and what actions the Biden administration has taken to date. You will also find an overview of legislative and executive actions important to moving Puerto Rico forward including in the President's Build Back Better agenda.
- **Investing federal dollars to build back better - and save lives**
The widespread destruction of the energy grid has created an opportunity to rebuild Puerto Rico in a more durable, resilient, and decentralized way based on renewable energy sources prioritizing rooftop solar energy. Everything possible should be done to help the island meet its goal of 100% renewable energy by 2050. The *Take Action for Puerto Rico!* Toolkit provides policy recommendations to ensure this happens.

- **Empowered Community:** Puerto Ricans have been U.S. citizens since 1917, yet the aftermath of Hurricane Maria exposed the disparate treatment of the island's citizens by their federal government on several fronts. In addition, the need for strong community oversight and transparency has never been greater, especially after the historic people-power protests that galvanized Puerto Rico over the Summer of 2019. Our *Take Action for Puerto Rico!* Toolkit provides all the information and materials you need to empower you, your fellow advocates, and organizations to take action on behalf of Puerto Rico.
- **Economic Redevelopment:** Puerto Rico is under historic financial distress, which has severely hampered the island's ability to restart its own economy. The debt cannot be prioritized or come before basic needs such as housing, energy, healthcare, lifesaving infrastructure, and education. The *Take Action for Puerto Rico!* Toolkit explains why helping the island and its already impoverished people should take precedence over debt repayments and argues that Puerto Rico should be allowed to discharge any illegal or unconstitutional debt.

The TA4PR! Advocacy Toolkit provides more information on how to amplify your groups' message to reach wider audiences on this topic.

We are so grateful for your participation! ***Take Action for Puerto Rico!*** coalition partners are deeply invested in your efforts and success and are here to assist you with any request or information that you need for successful participation in this national campaign.

For more information or questions regarding ***Take Action for Puerto Rico!*** please contact info@takeaction4pr.org.