



Welcome to *Take Action 4 Puerto Rico!* 2022

Our annual *Take Action for Puerto Rico!* campaign kicks-off as we reach the five-year mark of Hurricane Maria on September 20th and will continue until significant parity, respect, and a just recovery for Puerto Rico is achieved. The *Take Action for Puerto Rico!* Toolkit has the information and resources you need to be an effective agent of change for Puerto Rico.

Five 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.

Support for fair treatment of Puerto Rico has grown over the past five years as more people have learned about and come to understand the impact of the inequities faced by the island at the hands of the federal government, and the role that years of systemic inequities played in creating a vulnerable Puerto Rico.

Through hard work and advocacy with partners such as yourself, we've been able to make significant progress toward achieving some of our shared goals. In the last five years, we've been able to get unfair restrictions on disaster spending lifted, achieve parity for anti-poverty measures like the Child Tax Credit (CTC), higher funding for the island's Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC), and increase in the federal share of the Medicaid program. There is much more that needs to be done to build on these successes - including ending all systemic disparities in federal funding and unfair federal treatment of Puerto Rico.

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 five years after Hurricanes Irma and Maria devastated the island. These critical issues include:

- a just and sustainable recovery,
- equity and an end to discrimination by the federal government, and
- a return democratic self-governance for Puerto Rico

Here's how you can help - choose the areas that speak to you, about which you are the most passionate, and deliver the message that Puerto Rico deserves better:

Puerto Rico Deserves a Just and Sustainable Recovery:

- **Investing federal dollars to 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. Federal funds to rebuild Puerto Rico's energy grid must only be used to meet the island's renewable energy mandates, not used to invest in continued reliance on polluting fossil fuels. The Take Action for Puerto Rico! Toolkit provides policy recommendations for Congress and the Biden Administration to ensure this happens.
- **Ensure transparency and community participation in recovery:** The Take Action for Puerto Rico! Toolkit provides useful background information about how - and why - Congress and the President must ensure all federal disaster recovery and infrastructure investment funds are effectively used by requiring transparency and civil society input in decision-making processes for the sustainable recovery of Puerto Rico. You will also find an overview of legislative and executive actions important to moving Puerto Rico forward.

Puerto Ricans Deserve Equitable Treatment and an End to Discrimination by the Federal Government:

- **Puerto Ricans deserve to be treated the same as U.S. citizens living in the States.** 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 catastrophic drop in federal Medicaid funding this year when a temporary [federal funding boost is set to expire](#).
- People living in Puerto Rico are excluded from receiving Supplemental Security Income benefits (SSI), which is available to low-income elderly, disabled, and blind Americans in all 50 states, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI), and the District of Columbia due to years of discrimination based in large part on centuries-old racist Supreme Court precedents called the Insular Cases.
- Despite high rates of food insecurity, federal nutrition aid is also artificially capped for Puerto Rico, because the island is excluded from the SNAP, or Food Stamp program. 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 appeals court decision was overturned by the U.S. Supreme Court, and legal discrimination continues in areas such as nutritional assistance for low income families, and the denial of SSI and other benefits.
- The Take Action for Puerto Rico! Toolkit points to specific legislation and executive action your Member of Congress and the President should take in order to end the denial of equitable federal funding for critical anti-poverty programs in Puerto Rico.

Puerto Rico Deserves Democratic Self-Governance:

- **Terminate the role of the FOMB:** Puerto Rico has been ruled by an unelected, federally appointed, Fiscal Control Board (or FOMB) since 2016 that is the ultimate authority on all fiscal and financial decisions in the island. The board has broad powers, even the authority to annul laws duly approved by Puerto Rico's elected officials. Repealing the undemocratic FOMB, auditing its decision making for accountability, and providing for a smooth transition, would help return Puerto Rico to democratic self-governance by its elected representatives.
- **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 with economic tools, full equity in federal programs and other measures should take precedence over debt repayments and argues that Puerto Rico should be allowed to discharge any illegal or unconstitutional debt. The toolkit also provides information on legislation and executive action that can provide the tools for Puerto Rico to develop its economy in a more sustainable and self-reliant way.
- The TA4PR! Advocacy Toolkit provides more information on how to amplify your groups' message to reach wider audiences.

We are so grateful for your participation! **Take Action for Puerto Rico!** campaign is deeply invested in your efforts and success and is 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.