

**Statement by Mrs. Ivette Chardon
House Natural Resources Committee
Public Input Forum on the Puerto Rico Status Act
San Juan, PR, USA
June 4, 2022**

WELCOME TO PUERTO RICO "THE PEARL OF THE CARIBBEAN"

MY NAME IS IVETTE CHARDON, I AM A PUERTO RICAN BABY BOOMER, FROM PONCE, PUERTO RICO, WHO FEELS HONORED BY THIS UNIQUE OPPORTUNITY TO EXPRESS MY FEELINGS AND BELIEFS ABOUT MY ISLAND'S SITUATION. I THANK ALL OF YOU FOR YOUR EFFORT AND DEDICATION TO REACH CONSENSUS AND DESIGN THIS COMPROMISE DRAFT.

I AM A VERY PROUD U. S. CITIZEN, LIKE MOST OF MY FELLOW PUERTO RICANS ON THE ISLAND, YET I CAN NOT FEEL PROUD OF THE FACT THAT MY NATION MAINTAINS 3.2M DISENFRANCHISED, 2ND CLASS U.S. CITIZENS, LIVING UNDER COLONIALISM IN THE 21ST CENTURY.

BEING A BABY BOOMER, I HAVE LIVED THE HISTORY OF THIS COLONIAL STATUS AND HAVE SEEN HOW THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT MODEL OF THE COMMONWEALTH OF PUERTO RICO HAS NOT WORKED, IT HAS FAILED. IT HAS KEPT US STAGNANT AND POOR. IT HAS DRIVEN US INTO BANKRUPTCY. MY PUERTO RICO HAS BECOME A TAX HAVEN TROPICAL PARADISE, FOR OTHERS.

THANK YOU REPRESENTATIVE VELÁZQUEZ, YOU COULD NOT HAVE DESCRIBED IT ANY BETTER, WHEN YOU SAID, AND I QUOTE: "THE CURRENT STATUS IS UNSUSTAINABLE, UNJUST AND UNDIGNIFIED". THANK YOU, NYDIA MARGARITA, YOU MADE MY DAY. I KNOW YOU MUST HAVE LOOKED DEEP INTO YOUR PUERTO RICAN HEART, AND AS RESIDENT COMMISSIONER GONZALEZ-COLON SAID, I RESPECT YOU MORE.

DOING SOME RESEARCH I LEARNED THAT PUERTO RICANS HAVE LOYALLY, BRAVELY SACRIFICED, SHED SWEAT, BLOOD AND TEARS FOR OUR NOBLE FLAG, EVER SINCE THE REVOLUTIONARY WAR AND ALSO DURING THE CIVIL WAR.

AS I SPEAK HERE TODAY SOME 35,000 PUERTO RICANS ARE IN ACTIVE DUTY AND SOME 330,000 VETERANS FROM THE ISLAND HAVE BRAVELY AND PROUDLY SERVED IN EVERY SINGLE MILITARY CONFLICT SINCE WWI. PUERTO RICANS HAVE EXCELLED IN MANY FIELDS OTHER THAN THE MILITARY, WHERE THEY RECEIVED THE CONGRESSIONAL GOLD MEDAL AND MULTIPLE MEDALS OF HONOR.

PUERTO RICANS HAVE EXCELLED IN SCIENCE, THE ARTS, SPORTS, MUSIC, GRAMMYS, OSCARS, NASA, A JUDGE IN THE SUPREME COURT, AND A SURGEON GENERAL. THESE LAST TWO, PUERTO RICAN WOMEN. CAN YOU IMAGINE HOW MUCH MORE WE COULD CONTRIBUTE IF

WE WERE TO ENJOY FULL EQUALITY AND DEMOCRACY LIKE OUR FELLOW CITIZENS IN THE STATES?

PUERTO RICO IS THE SOUTHERNMOST BORDER OF THIS NATION. IT IS AMERICA'S BRIDGE TO LATIN AND SOUTH AMERICA. AS A STATE WE WOULD NOT BE A BURDEN TO THE UNION, AU CONTRAIRE, WE WOULD ADD ANOTHER STAR TO OUR NOBLE FLAG, ASSUMING ALL THE RESPONSIBILITIES AND RIGHTS IT IMPLIES TO BE A STATE OF THE GREATEST, MOST DEMOCRATIC NATION ON EARTH.

AS A WOMAN, WIFE, MOTHER AND GRANDMOTHER, I RESPECTFULLY ASK OF YOU TODAY TO ALLOW US TO REACH OUR DREAM, THE AMERICAN DREAM, WITHOUT THE NEED TO SPLIT OUR FAMILIES AND WITHOUT FEELING FORCED TO MOVE STATESIDE IN SEARCH OF EQUALITY, VOTING RIGHTS, BETTER OPPORTUNITIES AND A BETTER QUALITY OF LIFE. OUR FAMILIES ARE THE NUCLEI OF SOCIETY, AND THE COLONIAL TERRITORY IS TEARING THEM APART. THIS HAS TO STOP!

I RESPECTFULLY ASK OF YOU TODAY, PLEASE BE ON THE RIGHT SIDE OF HISTORY AND MAKE IT PART OF YOUR LEGACY IN CONGRESS TO GIVE US, PUERTO RICANS, THE OPPORTUNITY TO DEMOCRATICALLY EXPRESS OURSELVES AT THE BALLOT BOX AND DECIDE ON OUR POLITICAL FUTURE. YOU HAVE THE POWER TO STOP 124 YEARS OF COLONIZATION, DISCRIMINATION, VOTER SUPPRESSION, INEQUALITY, CIVIL AND HUMAN RIGHTS DEPRIVATION AND RACISM. NOW IS THE TIME TO USE THAT POWER AND ENLIGHTEN OTHERS IN CONGRESS TO JOIN YOU.

I HAVE READ THE DRAFT COMPROMISE BILL AND I AM PROUD TO SUPPORT IT. I AM NOT A JURIST SO I DON'T SEE THE IMPERFECTIONS MENTIONED BY SOME, BUT DURING THE LEGISLATIVE PROCESS I URGE YOU TO PROTECT THE PUERTO RICO STATUS ACT FROM ANY POISON PILL AMMENDMENTS THAT WOULD ANNUL ALL OF YOUR HARD WORK AND DEDICATION TO THIS HISTORIC PIECE OF LEGISLATION.

SUPPORT THE PUERTO RICO STATUS ACT, TAKE IT TO THE FLOOR, GET IT PASSED THE SENATE AND MAKE IT INTO LAW!

PUERTO RICO HAS ALWAYS SAID YES TO USA. WE INVITE CONGRESS TO "SAY YES TO PUERTO RICO!" WE ARE AMERICANS TOO!

THANK YOU.