

- **Chairman Smith, Ranking Member Neal, and distinguished Members of the Ways and Means Committee:**
- Thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today and share the issues that are critical to Puerto Rico's success.
- As Puerto Rico's Resident Commissioner and the representative of over 3 million U.S. citizens in Congress, my goal is to ensure that our island's economic development through small business incentives, federal program parity, and energy reconstruction remain at the forefront of legislative discussions here in Washington, D.C.
- **First, we must urgently address Puerto Rico's energy challenges.**
- As you know, Puerto Rico experienced a major power grid blackout on New Year's Eve, leaving the entire island without power.

- Our outdated energy infrastructure, coupled with the devastating impact of recent natural disasters like hurricanes and earthquakes, has created significant vulnerabilities for residents and businesses, hampering Puerto Rico's economic growth.
- Economic growth for small businesses relies on accessible and affordable energy.
- By advancing innovative, long-term solutions—such as expanded funding and tax incentives for economic development—we can accelerate energy reconstruction and transition Puerto Rico to a resilient, energy future that supports business success and sustainability.
- This is not just about modernizing infrastructure—it is about ensuring energy security for Puerto Rico while contributing

to broader U.S. energy goals and meeting the needs of small businesses.

- **Second, addressing long-standing inequities in federal programs is critical.**
- Residents of Puerto Rico continue to face disparities in key federal programs such as Medicare, Medicaid, and Supplemental Security Income (SSI).
- These inequities disproportionately harm our most vulnerable populations, particularly seniors and children while also hindering economic stability on the island.
- Additionally, the expansion of the Child Tax Credit (CTC) has significantly benefited families in Puerto Rico and across the country.

- This expansion increased eligibility from 20,000 to 225,000 families, providing an average of \$4,700 per family and making a substantial impact in reducing child poverty.
- Unless Congress acts to extend these critical tax provisions, CTC is set to revert to \$1,000 per child at the end of 2025.
- I urge Congress to extend and expand the Child Tax Credit (CTC) to benefit Puerto Ricans, and to enact long-term, equitable funding solutions that ensure stability and fairness in these essential programs.
- Addressing these disparities is also fostering sustained economic growth in Puerto Rico.
- **Third, restoring Puerto Rico's economic competitiveness and advancing its role in U.S.-Caribbean relations is essential for U.S. national security in the region.**

- Our island has historically served as a bridge between the United States and the Caribbean Basin.
- During the 1980s and 1990s, Puerto Rico's involvement in President Reagan's Caribbean Basin Initiative was instrumental to its success.
- Today, with China's growing influence in the region, Puerto Rico has a renewed opportunity to play a key role in securing stronger U.S.-Caribbean partnerships.
- The Caribbean region is ready for U.S. leadership, and Puerto Rico is the right partner and is uniquely positioned to help reaffirm American influence.
- One promising bipartisan initiative is the **Supply Chain Growth and Recovery Act**,

introduced by Congresswoman Malliotakis of this Committee, which incentivizes investments in Puerto Rico to reshore critical supply chains to the United States.

- This legislation not only supports our local economy and boosts domestic production but also strengthens U.S. supply chain resilience and reduces reliance on foreign adversaries like China.
- **In conclusion, Puerto Rico has been—and continues to be—a vital part of the United States.**
- I urge this Committee to prioritize Puerto Rico's inclusion in any legislation that comes out of the Ways and Means Committee, address inequities in federal programs, restore economic competitiveness, and invest in our energy future.

- These actions will not only strengthen Puerto Rico but also advance the interests of the United States as a whole.
- I extend a warm invitation to each member of this Committee to visit our beautiful island, where you can witness firsthand the resilience, potential, and pride of the Puerto Rican people.
- Thank you again for the opportunity to speak today.
- I look forward to working with you to advance policies that benefit Puerto Rico and our nation.