



CONGRESSWOMAN JENNIFFER GONZÁLEZ-COLÓN

PUERTO RICO - AT LARGE

**Appropriations Full Committee Member Day Hearing
FY 2022 Appropriations Bills
U.S. House Committee on Appropriations
Rep. Jenniffer González-Colón
Thursday, May 27, 2021**

Chairwoman DeLauro and Ranking Member Granger, thank you for the opportunity to testify on some of Puerto Rico's priorities for the FY 2022 Appropriations bills.

I would like to focus my testimony today on the 10 Community Project Funding requests I submitted on behalf of my constituents for the Committee's consideration. These span a variety of issues crucial for both low-income and rural communities on the Island, including water infrastructure improvements, food security, public safety, services for underserved populations, and projects to spur economic development.

First, I'm requesting that the Committee provide the necessary funding to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to finally begin the construction phase of the Caño Martín Peña Ecosystem Restoration Project, an authorized project that will help address detrimental conditions currently challenging the health and wellbeing of approximately 26,000 residents across 8 communities, the area's economic development, and critical infrastructure like the Luis Muñoz Marín International Airport in San Juan.

I'm also requesting funding for the Inter American University of Puerto Rico, Barranquitas Campus to build the Center for Food Security and Sustainable Agriculture, which would expand

their laboratory capabilities and maximize agricultural production by developing in vitro seeds to be used by local farmers and researchers. This will in turn support food security, agricultural research, and crop production in Puerto Rico, all while assisting the economies of our rural municipalities in the Island's mountainous, central region.

To improve public safety in the rural municipality of Utuado, I requested assistance under the Byrne JAG account to help purchase law enforcement equipment for the municipal police force, including bulletproof vests and technological equipment.

I also submitted a request on behalf of SER de Puerto Rico, a nonprofit organization on the Island that is seeking funding to finance a program to support the comprehensive development of children diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorder in Puerto Rico from the ages of 18 months to 6 years, based on principles of Applied Behavioral Analysis.

Lastly, I submitted 6 requests under the Economic Development Initiative account to address pressing needs in some of our low-income communities. For instance, funding to build stormwater infrastructure in the only public landfill in the Municipality of Lajas and help extend its use by 25 years.

Assistance for the Municipality of Yauco, to fund the construction of a new well and other improvements for the community water system in Barrio Rubias, a low-income, rural community that has historically lacked reliable water service.

Funding for the Puerto Rico Department of Agriculture to rehabilitate and address some of the infrastructure needs of the Jarealito Fishing Village in Arecibo. This will be crucial to ensure it complies with appropriate food safety standards and can continue supporting fishing activities, which are one of the main economic drivers of nearby low-income, coastal communities.

Financial assistance to help the Boys and Girls Club of Puerto Rico rehabilitate an unused public school they acquired to build their new community facility in the Municipality of San Lorenzo and thus make it suitable to serve students, residents, and their employees.

On behalf of the Municipality of Patillas, funding to rehabilitate Bosque Forestal, a forest recreation area. And on behalf of the Municipality of Vega Alta, a request to help fund the construction of an agritourism complex. Both projects seek to promote tourism and generate economic growth in these areas.

I respectfully ask that the Committee consider all ten of these requests, which have strong community support and will help address important issues in Puerto Rico.

Thank you