



CONGRESSWOMAN JENNIFFER GONZÁLEZ-COLÓN

PUERTO RICO - AT LARGE

**Remarks Delivered on Member Day
Re: FY20 Appropriations Request
Subcommittee on Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration,
and Related Agencies
House Committee on Appropriations
2362-A Rayburn House Office Building. 2:50 pm- 3:00 pm**

Thank you, Chairman Bishop and Ranking Member Fortenberry.

As you are probably aware, Puerto Rico does not participate in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, or SNAP, like our counterparts in the 50 States, DC, USVI and Guam.

Instead, Puerto Rico has a capped block grant called the Nutrition Assistance Program, or NAP, which is typically funded at 1.8 to 1.9 billion every year.

Mr. Chairman, the hurricanes in 2017 revealed the many challenges tied to NAP- starting with a remarkable difference in benefits. To give you an idea, a household of one in Puerto Rico receives 112 dollars,

whereas a household of one in the continental states and DC receives 194 dollars.

The amount of funding tied to PAN has proven to be insufficient- especially in the aftermath of Hurricanes Irma and Maria when people were experiencing extreme financial hardships. To make matters more difficult, the Senate's consideration of a disaster bill has come to a standstill, limiting the access to 600 million in additional disaster nutrition funds.

Mr. Chairman, it becomes clear that we need to improve nutrition assistance on the island. With this in mind, I am requesting your consideration of for including report language in your upcoming appropriations bill for fiscal year 2020 related to Puerto Rico's NAP Program.

My first request is tied to the Thrifty Food Plan. The calculation of our block grant is heavily influenced by the Thrifty Food Plan calculation of the 50 contiguous states.

However, Puerto Rico imports close to 80% of the food items it consumes, and this is factored in to the price consumers pay when purchasing these items.

My proposed report language would require USDA to measure the cost of the Thrifty Food Plan in Puerto Rico and give us a better idea of how this calculation could be better addressed and reflect the reality of purchasing food on the island.

My second request directs the USDA to publish information of the NAP Program on their website. One of the reasons why NAP is a challenging program for many to understand is due to lack of access to reliable data.

Having USDA publish information including basic program rules, monthly enrollment and disbursement data, and other program information would increase transparency and would inform us on potential ways to improve the program, make informed decisions and- ultimately- strongly consider a transition to SNAP.

Mr. Chairman, thank you for your consideration to my requests and for the opportunity to testify. I yield back.