



NHCSL

THE NATIONAL HISPANIC CAUCUS OF STATE LEGISLATORS

RESOLUTION

No. 2021-10

Extend the Supplemental Security Income program to Puerto Rico, the United States Virgin Islands, Guam, and American Samoa

Reported to the Caucus by the NHCSL Government, Social Justice and
Taxation Task Force
Del. Alfonso López (VA), Chair

Sponsored by Asw. Yvonne López (NJ)

Ratified by the Caucus on March 26, 2022

WHEREAS, the Social Security Administration's Supplemental Security Income (SSI) program is the Federal income supplement program designed to assist the aged, blind and disabled who have little or no income, providing cash to meet basic needs for food, clothing, and shelter; and,

WHEREAS, the SSI program is accessible to all American citizens in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, and the Northern Mariana Islands, but excludes the U.S. territories of American Samoa, Guam, Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands; and,

WHEREAS, the U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals for the First Circuit ruled in April 2020 that it was unconstitutional for the Social Security Administration (SSA) to deny Supplemental Security Income to otherwise qualified individuals based on their residence in Puerto Rico because doing so is not rationally related to any legitimate government interest;¹ and,

¹ *U.S. v. Vaello-Madero*, 956 F. 3d 12 (1st Cir. 2020). Available at https://scholar.google.com/scholar_case?case=7994350871460732063

Extend SSI to Puerto Rico, the United States Virgin Islands, Guam, and American Samoa

WHEREAS, more than 700,000 individuals in Puerto Rico would be otherwise eligible for SSI, and the Puerto Rican Aid to the Aged, Blind and Disabled program is too stringent and underfunded to offer meaningful assistance to the Puerto Rican people; and,

WHEREAS, more than 40% of Puerto Ricans live in poverty, a rate higher than any U.S. state; and,

WHEREAS, President Joseph R. Biden urged the United States Congress to amend the Social Security Act to allow Puerto Rican residents and residents of the U.S. territories to receive Supplemental Security Income like their fellow United States citizens;² and,

WHEREAS, H.R. 537, the Supplemental Security Income Equality Act, sponsored by Congresswoman Jenniffer González-Colón (PR) seeks to extend the Supplemental Security Income (SSI) program to Puerto Rico, the Virgin Islands, and Guam.³

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the National Hispanic Caucus of State Legislators calls on the United States Congress to extend the right to Supplemental Security Income to the residents of Puerto Rico and the residents of all U.S. Territories and supports the enactment of H.R. 537 the Supplemental Security Income Equality Act.

THE NATIONAL HISPANIC CAUCUS OF STATE LEGISLATORS UNANIMOUSLY RATIFIED THIS RESOLUTION ON MARCH 26, 2022, AT ITS ANNUAL MEETING IN WASHINGTON, DC.

² Statement by President Joseph R. Biden, Jr. on Puerto Rico (June 7, 2021). Available at <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2021/06/07/statement-by-president-joseph-r-biden-jr-on-puerto-rico/>

³ HR 537 – Available at <https://www.congress.gov/bill/117th-congress/house-bill/537>