

AFL-CIO

AMERICA'S UNIONS

February 7, 2020

Dear Representative:

On behalf of the AFL-CIO, I am writing to express our strong support for the Emergency Supplemental Appropriations for Disaster Relief and Puerto Rico Disaster Tax Relief Act of 2020 (H.R. 5687), which is scheduled for floor consideration today. Urgent action is necessary to address the humanitarian and fiscal crisis faced by Puerto Rico, and each day that goes by without action means continued misery for Puerto Ricans.

The AFL-CIO is involved in coordinated efforts on the ground in Puerto Rico, and working people will continue to assist local communities until the recovery is complete. Several national unions including the American Federation of Teachers (AFT), the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME) and National Nurses United (NNU) are on the ground in Puerto Rico coordinating with local officials to learn what local residents need and how best to address those needs. The AFL-CIO's Maritime Trades Department and the Seafarers International Union (SIU) are delivering supplies, while the Laborers International Union of North America (LIUNA) has workers on the ground in several affected areas. However, our efforts are obviously not enough. Puerto Rico desperately needs the assistance of the Congress, specifically enactment of H.R. 5687.

H.R. 5687 would appropriate \$4.67 billion in disaster relief to Puerto Rico through five federal agencies. This includes \$3.26 billion for the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program and \$1.25 Billion for the Federal Highway Administration's Emergency Relief Program to repair road systems damaged by natural disasters. The bill also includes \$100 million for recovery funds to meet the needs of students affected by earthquakes in 2019 or 2020 and \$40 million for a nutrition assistance grant to Puerto Rico. Finally, the bill would also give a significant income boost to low- and moderate-income families in Puerto Rico through the progressive expansion of the Child Tax Credit (CTC) and a locally funded Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC).

Puerto Rico faces a host of formidable challenges, including low labor force participation, chronic poverty, over a decade of economic decline, and the prolonged effects of the devastating hurricanes of 2017 and earthquakes of 2019. Puerto Rico needs our help.

The AFL-CIO urges you to vote for H.R. 5687. Let us begin to address these challenges adequately and meet the urgent needs of Puerto Rico's 3.4 million U.S. citizens.

Sincerely,



William Samuel
Director, Government Affairs

American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations

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