



Congresswoman Stephanie Murphy
Statement as Prepared for Delivery
Event on Puerto Rico Financial Oversight and Management Board
Kissimmee, Florida
March 22, 2017

Thank you to the organizers of this event for inviting me to speak. Because Congress is in session this week, I am in Washington, DC. But I wanted to make sure I sent a message of support to you all.

Puerto Rico is deeply important to me. Because you have friends and family still living on the island, you know the 3.4 million American citizens that reside in Puerto Rico are not treated fairly by their national government.

First, the people of Puerto Rico lack basic rights that their fellow citizens living in the states take for granted—the right to vote for president, for U.S. senators, and for voting members of the U.S. House.

Second, the people of Puerto Rico are treated unequally under many federal programs, including critically-important programs like Medicaid, Medicare, and the child tax credit program.

Primarily because of this undemocratic and unequal treatment, Puerto Rico has been struggling, especially in recent years. Hundreds of thousands of island residents have left Puerto Rico in search of better quality of life. Florida, and central Florida in particular, is their most popular destination.

We welcome them here with open arms, because Puerto Ricans contribute so much to our communities. But it is sad that they feel compelled to leave behind the island of their birth and the island they love, *la isla del encanto*.

My commitment to the people of Puerto Rico, and to those who love the island, is this.

First, the most urgent crisis in Puerto Rico involves Medicaid. The island received a significant amount of additional Medicaid funding in the Affordable Care Act, but this money will run out this year. If Congress does not replenish it, Puerto Rico's Medicaid program will collapse. Puerto Rico's most vulnerable citizens, including tens of thousands of children, will lose their health insurance. You have my word that I am doing everything in my power, working with my Republican and Democratic colleagues in Congress, to avoid this result. Inaction by Congress on this issue will lead to a genuine humanitarian catastrophe in Puerto Rico.

Second, Puerto Rico must use the tools provided by PROMESA to restructure the island's outstanding debt in a meaningful and fair way under the supervision of a federal judge. I note that PROMESA requires the fiscal plan put forward by the governor and approved by the Oversight Board to provide funding for essential public services like education, public safety and health, and to provide adequate funding for the island's public pension systems, which have been severely underfunded over the years. Rest assured that I am closely watching the actions of the Oversight Board, and will not hesitate to speak out if I believe its decisions are harmful to the people of Puerto Rico.

Third and finally, I have already spoken on the House floor about my views on Puerto Rico's political status. Puerto Rico's current status is unjust and has outlived its usefulness. I believe Puerto Rico must turn the page on its territory status and become a state or a sovereign nation. Both statehood and nationhood are democratic and dignified status options, and the people of Puerto Rico deserve democracy and dignity—nothing less.

Thank you.