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**NYS ASSEMBLY
PUERTO RICAN/HISPANIC
TASK FORCE**



HON. MARITZA DAVILA
CHAIRWOMAN

**Statement of the Puerto/Rican Hispanic Task Force
In Support of Rights of all U.S. Citizens to have
access to nationwide federal aid programs**

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Jonathan Harkavy
Executive Director

We as a Task Force welcome the news that New York Attorney General Letitia James joined a coalition of 18 attorneys general urging the U.S. Supreme Court to reject the exclusion of Americans living in Puerto Rico and other U.S. territories from nationwide federal aid programs.

Congress launched the social security insurance program to provide low-income elderly, blind, or disabled Americans with monthly financial assistance. However, only residents of the 50 states, the District of Columbia, and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands are eligible for this program under federal law. Americans living in Puerto Rico, Guam, the U.S. Virgin Islands, and American Samoa are not eligible for this assistance. The pandemic has only exacerbated the poverty faced by all Americans, from businesses being closed to travel bans affecting tourism and a lack of affordable childcare.

The United States has a storied history of sending aid around the world and to citizens during dire situations while abroad, as we've most recently seen in Afghanistan. Years ago, we decided that separate but equal was not only wrong but illegal. Therefore, we cannot understand the discriminatory exclusion of US taxpaying citizens from life-saving financial aid, especially those living in territories that serve this country every day in its armed services.

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