

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

July 7, 2016

President Barack Obama
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

We write regarding the creation of the Oversight Board established by the Puerto Rico Oversight, Management, and Economic Stability Act (PROMESA). As the board will hold unprecedented power over the fiscal management and general governance of the island, we ask that you honor the concept of self-governance and appoint only qualified candidates from Puerto Rico. The Puerto Rican people deserve this most basic respect.

As you know, Section 101(e) of PROMESA creates an Oversight Board for Puerto Rico comprised of seven individuals from lists submitted by Congressional leadership and an appointment in the President's sole discretion. This board has wide powers over Puerto Rico, including the authority to write the island's Fiscal Plan, determine their annual budgets, veto their laws, override their regulations and executive orders, and make recommendations with the force of law. As the bill's own author noted, these powers are "far beyond that exercised by the Control Board established for the District of Columbia."

It is imperative that Puerto Ricans be given at least some voice on the Oversight Board. It will have the power to implement policies that would close schools; shutter hospitals; cut pensions; and lay off teachers, police, and firefighters. It has few boundaries on its powers, as the island is statutorily barred from exercising any oversight over the board and the board is immune from lawsuits resulting from actions taken under PROMESA. Considering these far-reaching authorities, the people of Puerto Rico should have considerable input in how this board will control the island.

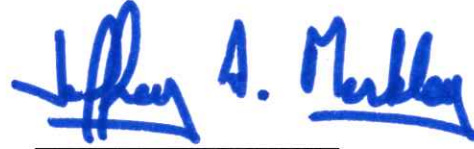
We remain disappointed that the democratically elected representatives of Puerto Rico were not given any representation on the board, and we find it highly objectionable that neither they nor the people will be given an opportunity to weigh in on the establishment of the board. However, at a bare minimum, you should ensure that the board is composed of members who maintain a primary residence on the island and have a strong understanding of the structural causes of poverty in Puerto Rico and its socio-economic history.

Thank you for your attention to this important issue.

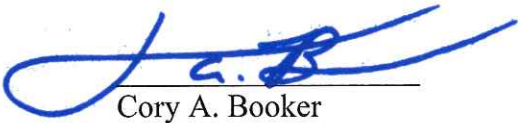
Sincerely,

Handwritten signature of Robert Menendez in blue ink.

Robert Menendez
United States Senator

Handwritten signature of Jeffrey A. Merkley in blue ink.

Jeffrey A. Merkley
United States Senator

Handwritten signature of Cory A. Booker in blue ink.

Cory A. Booker
United States Senator

Handwritten signature of Bernard Sanders in blue ink.

Bernard Sanders
United States Senator