







improved upon. Given that H.R. 2757 has already gained six Republican cosponsors, including Resident Commissioner and a majority member on the Committee, Jenniffer González-Colón, we believe that opening the discussion on the topic of Puerto Rico's status can create space for this bipartisan support to grow. Just as you helped lead the establishment of the Bipartisan Task Force Combatting Chinese Government's Influence in the Indo-Pacific,<sup>10</sup> we believe that you can also help lead a bipartisan effort to look at the issue of resolving Puerto Rico's status with a fresh set of eyes and a broader perspective on the implications of this issue. Simply put, these matters are the most important policy issues that the Committee has under its jurisdiction.

Under your leadership, the 118th Congress can bravely continue the momentum from the 117<sup>th</sup> Congress, and allow for the perspectives of Republicans, Democrats and other stakeholders to be heard. By holding legislative hearings, the Committee will have the opportunity to discuss and debate the substantive concerns you and other members raised prior to the House vote last year. This will create an opportunity for you to situate the discussion of this issue in a broader context, including the newest revelations regarding China's attempt to reshape the global geopolitical landscape by establishing a presence in the Caribbean. As proud American citizens and supporters of statehood for Puerto Rico, we share your vision and commitment for a stronger and more prosperous America. We believe that our island has contributed greatly and has much more that it can contribute, not only to America's prosperity and security, but also to the prospects of democracy, stability and peace at the global level.

However, for Puerto Rico to truly thrive, prosper, and reach its full potential, it needs full democracy. The current territory status of Puerto Rico not only disenfranchises our fellow U.S. citizens and disregards their sacrifices and contributions to the Nation, but also fails to meet America's founding democratic principles of representation and equality. Moreover, if Congress continues to keep Puerto Rico in a perpetually weak and underdeveloped status as a U.S. territory, it is ignoring a major threat to America's national security interests and standing in Latin America, the Caribbean and worldwide.

As Chairman of the Committee with jurisdiction over this issue, you have the power to transform the gridlock on this issue into an opportunity for both Puerto Rico and the U.S. Therefore, we strongly urge you to build on the progress made in H.R. 2757, hold legislative hearings in the Committee to address substantive concerns, clarify ambiguous sections of that bill, and, if needed, present new legislation that can address this critical issue in a way that helps unleash Puerto Rico's potential and strengthens America's prosperity, security and global standing. Thank you in advance for your attention and efforts on this matter.



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<sup>10</sup> Committee Announces Bipartisan Task Force Combatting Chinese Government's Influence in the Indo-Pacific, H. Comm. on Natural Res., (June 7, 2023), <https://naturalresources.house.gov/news/documentsingle.aspx?DocumentID=413401>.

Sincerely,

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