

December 6, 2022

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker of the House
United States House of Representatives

The Honorable Chuck Schumer
Senate Majority Leader
United States Senate

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Senate Minority Leader
United States Senate

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy
House Minority Leader
United States House of Representatives

Dear Speaker Pelosi, Senate Majority Leader Schumer, Senate Minority Leader McConnell, and House Minority Leader McCarthy:

We write on behalf of the 100 undersigned Disability-led and Disability-supporting organizations, in support of Chairman Grijalva's and other members of Congress, request to appropriate \$5 billion for rooftop solar and storage to households with people with disabilities and other multiply marginalized people residing in Puerto Rico.

According to the U.S. Census, there are approximately 486,180 Puerto Ricans with a disability who are under the age of 65, and 745,695 Puerto Ricans who are 65 or older.

Disabled people are disproportionately impacted by power loss from constant recurring disasters. Disabled people were injured and likely died because they lacked power to keep medication cool or operate ventilators and other life sustaining equipment, as seen most recently during and after Hurricanes Fiona and María.

According to the National Council on Disability report, Disparate Treatment of Puerto Rico Residents with Disabilities in Federal Programs and Benefits, María wiped out Puerto Rico's infrastructure: there was no electricity, water, or telecommunication systems. In María's aftermath, some 3.4 million American citizens found themselves in a humanitarian crisis, without functional infrastructure or power for over six months. This was particularly traumatic for the nearly 687,000 Disabled Puerto Ricans who needed medication, oxygen, power for necessary mobility or communication equipment, or had other needs. There were systemic deficiencies in inclusive emergency planning, which caused Disabled Puerto Ricans to be institutionalized and die. It took Puerto Rico six months after María's landfall to enter into its recovery phase, and the Puerto Rican government failed to take the lead in restoring power and telecommunication systems to the island.

We ask you to take action on the request of Congressman Grijalva and other members of Congress to appropriate \$5 billion for rooftop solar and storage in Puerto Rico.

We emphasize the importance of making sure that any rooftop solar and storage program run by the federal Department of Energy is designed in collaboration with community-based organizations, including disability-led organizations like the two Centers for Independent Living on the Island, Movimiento para el Alcance de Vida Independiente (MAVI) and Centro Pro Vida Independiente (CEPVI), who have been responding to the needs of thousands of people with disabilities and older adults surviving disaster after disaster since Hurricane María in 2017. As well as the Puerto Rico University Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities (UCEDD) who have been working with MAVI and CEPVI since Hurricane María.

Five years after Hurricane María, Puerto Rico's electrical grid is in more disrepair than ever. The Puerto Rican government's privatization initiative, which led to the contract with LUMA Energy, resulted in even worse service and abysmally poor service restoration after Hurricane Fiona. Hundreds of thousands of people lost power for weeks on end, and LUMA's plans for the reconstruction of the grid have not involved any investment in rooftop solar and storage, despite the proven resiliency benefits of this technology. Meanwhile, the value of rooftop solar and storage is obvious to Puerto Rican residents, who have installed more than 50,000 systems to date. Yet the cost of rooftop solar remains out of reach for the majority of Puerto Rico's population.

The Queremos Sol coalition has published detailed modeling demonstrating the feasibility of transitioning to [75% distributed renewable energy](#) within 15 years. This would result in a resilient and affordable electrical system, rather than spending billions of dollars every year on imported fossil fuels to keep powering the current unreliable grid. Until such a transformation path is adopted, Congress will be appropriating billions of dollars after every hurricane that hits Puerto Rico to restore a vulnerable and increasingly fragile centralized fossil fuel-based grid.

In contrast, an allocation of \$5 billion in federal funds for rooftop solar and storage would help ensure that low-income and vulnerable households, especially households of people with disabilities, in Puerto Rico would be able to benefit from the resiliency afforded by rooftop solar and storage.

Muchas gracias for your attention to this urgent request to protect the hundreds of thousands of people with disabilities and older adults residing in Puerto Rico as well as the broader community from the devastation and death associated with long-term power outages.

Cc: Honorable Rosa DeLauro, Honorable Shalanda Young, Honorable Jennifer Granholm

Sincerely,

Able South Carolina

Access to Independence of Cortland County, Inc.

Acueducto Comunitario

ADAPT Montana

ADAPT National

ADAPT of Texas

All Kinds Accessibility Consulting

American Network of Community Options and Resources (ANCOR)

Asociación de Espina Bífida e Hidrocefalia de PR, Inc

Association of Assistive Technology Act Programs (ATAP)

Association of Programs for Rural Independent Living (APRIL)

Atlantis Community, Inc.

Autistic People of Color Fund

Autistic Self Advocacy Network (ASAN)

Autistic Women & Nonbinary Network (AWN)

Center for Independence (CFI)

Centro AYANI, Inc.

Centro Pro Vida Independiente (CEPVI)

CommunicationFIRST

Community Emergency Response Volunteers of the Monterey Peninsula

Congo Handicap International

Consejo Renal de Puerto Rico

Darren Bates, LLC

Defensoria de las Personas con Impedimentos

Departamento de la Familia

Disabilities Network of Eastern CT, Inc

Disability Pride PA

Disability Rights & Resources

Disability Rights North Carolina

Disabled in Action PA

Downstate New York ADAPT

El Centro Para Todos

Elevated Search and Rescue

En VICTORIA!

Ferreira Foundation

Florida Independent Living Council

GA ADAPT/ADAPTING Americas

Gigi's Latin Bistro

Gulf Coast ADAPT

Health Justice Commons

HelpAge USA

Iglesia Fe y Gracia PR

Iglesia Fuente de Amor y Verdad, Inc. /Ministerio de Capellanía Portadores de Amor, Inc.

Independence Northwest, Inc.

Instituto Psicopedagógico de Puerto Rico

Iowa Disability League

Island Corps

Junior League of Puerto Rico

Keystone Human Services International

Liberty Resources, Inc. (LRI)

Little Lobbyists

Los Amigos Felices

Madres Innovadoras

Maravilloso Huerto de Los Niños

Movimiento para el Alcance de Vida Independiente (MAVI)

National Association of Statewide Independent Living Councils, Inc.

National Council on Independent Living (NCIL)

National Pediatric Disaster Coalition

National Working Positive Coalition

Negociado para el Manejo de Emergencias

New Disabled South

New Jersey Disability Collective

North Carolina East Coast ADAPT

North Central PA ADAPT

NorthWest Colorado Center for Independence

PA ADAPT

PA Consumer Workforce Council (CWC)

Persona con Discapacidad / Diversidad Funcional

Personal Attendant Coalition of Texas (PACT)

Philly ADAPT

Pitbull's Angels Rescue of P. R. Inc.

Point Blank Range Group

Progressive Democrats Of America Disability Issues Team

PryMed Medical Care, inc

Puerto Rico Puppy Rescue

Puerto Rico SILC

Puerto Rico University Center on Excellence on Developmental Disabilities (PR-UCEDD)

Queer Women of Color Media Arts Project - QWOCCMAP

R.S. Dyton Associates

REACH, INC.

Redefining Bravery: Whole Community Consulting

Roads to Freedom Center for Independent Living (RTFCIL) of North Central PA

Rolling Start, Inc.

Save the Pine Bush

Sins Invalid

Sociedad Puertorriqueña de Epilepsia

Surcando la historia inc

Telecommunications for the Deaf & Hard of Hearing, Inc. (TDI)

The Carrion Movement

The Partnership for Inclusive Disaster Strategies (PIDS)

The Statewide Independent Living Council of Illinois

United States International Council on Disabilities

Universidad Ana G. Méndez

US Society for Augmentative and Alternative Communication -USSAAC

US Thalidomide Survivors

Veterans for Peace (VFP)

Washington ADAPT

Western PA ADAPT

World Institute on Disability (WID)

Yeshua Seeker Ministry