Friday, April 28, 2017

The Honorable Paul D. Ryan  
The Honorable Mitch McConnell  
Speaker of the House  
Majority Leader  
U.S. House of Representatives  
U.S. Senate  
Washington, D.C. 20510  
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi  
The Honorable Charles E. Schumer  
Minority Leader  
Minority Leader  
U.S. House of Representatives  
U.S Senate  
Washington, D.C. 20510  
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Speaker Ryan, Majority Leader McConnell, Minority Leader Pelosi and Minority Leader Schumer,

On behalf of the National Hispanic Leadership Agenda (NHLA), the coalition of the nation’s 45 preeminent Latino advocacy organizations, we are writing to urge you to include in the 2017 omnibus bill the $900 million which Health and Human Services Secretary Tom Price says is necessary for Puerto Rico to fulfill its Medicaid obligations through June 30, 2018.

Without this bridge funding, Puerto Rico will face a “Medicaid cliff” with devastating consequences for its people. When the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (ACA) was enacted, Puerto Rico received $6.4 billion in supplemental funding for its Medicaid program. This supplemental funding will be depleted before the end of 2017 at which point Puerto Rico will revert to receiving an annual capped federal Medicaid allotment estimated at $357.8 million in FY 2018. If Washington does not act, 480,000 individuals will lose their coverage by December, with another 510,000 to follow soon after.

The health-services industry in Puerto Rico which accounts for roughly 20 percent of the Puerto Rican economy will contract with the depletion of Medicaid funds. The exodus of Puerto Ricans to the mainland will accelerate and put a strain on stateside health care budgets. This additional crisis can be avoided if you include this $900 million appropriation that Puerto Rico so desperately needs.

The bipartisan Congressional Task Force on Economic Growth in Puerto Rico established under the PROMESA Act stated in its report:

“The Task Force believes that Puerto Rico and the other territories should be treated in a more equitable and sustainable manner under the Medicaid program, in order to improve patient outcomes in the territories, to strengthen the health care systems in the territories, to enhance federal oversight of those systems, to reduce the incentive for migration from the territories to the states and the associated financial costs to state governments and the federal government, and to stabilize and strengthen the fiscal condition of the territory governments.”
As Congress works to finalize the omnibus bill, the NHLA respectfully requests that Congress include Medicaid bridge funding of $900 million for Puerto Rico. Consistent with the finding of the bipartisan Congressional Task Force we also ask that Congress find an equitable and fiscally sustainable federal healthcare funding solution that meets Puerto Rico’s long term needs.

Sincerely,

Hector E. Sanchez

Chair, National Hispanic Leadership Agenda (NHLA)
Executive Director, Labor Council for Latin American Advancement (LCLAA)