

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

September 21, 2017

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Senate Majority Leader
S-230, U.S. Capitol
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Charles Schumer
Senate Minority Leader
S-221, U.S. Capitol
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Majority Leader McConnell and Minority Leader Schumer:

We have grave concerns with a provision in the bill sponsored by Senators Graham and Cassidy that would reduce by five percent the federal medical assistance percentage (FMAP) for the United States territories of Puerto Rico, the Virgin Islands, Guam, the Northern Mariana Islands, and American Samoa. This would achieve nothing but to worsen the unfair treatment that four million Americans living in these territories are currently subject to under the Medicaid program. It also runs contrary to the express recommendation of the Congressional Task Force on Economic Growth in Puerto Rico.

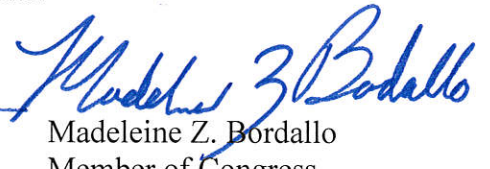
Medicaid in United States territories is already exceedingly underfunded. The federal contribution to Medicaid services in these territories, unlike anywhere else, is subject to an annual statutory cap that has no relationship to local health care needs, and the FMAP is restricted to an arbitrarily low rate of 55% despite relatively high levels of poverty and while mainland States with comparably low per capita incomes are eligible for up to 83% in matching funds. As a result, many thousands of Americans lose access to adequate care and providers go uncompensated, with deleterious impacts on local governments and hospitals. Aside from the moral and public policy reasons not to further reduce the territories' FMAP, it would not save any revenue for the federal government because all of the territories currently receive a capped appropriation to provide Medicaid services.

We have all advocated for the territories to receive an FMAP based on per capita income just like other Americans; but especially in the midst of severe natural disaster and security threats, the last thing the territories can tolerate at this time is a worsening of their inequitable treatment. It is noteworthy that Americans in the territories have contributed in disproportionate numbers to service in our armed forces, and there is no reason why the hundreds of thousands of soldiers and veterans from the territories are American enough to die for our country in combat, but are not American enough for equitable health care.

We strongly urge removal of this needless and unjustified provision.


Stacey E. Plaskett
Member of Congress


Jenniffer González-Colón
Member of Congress


Madeleine Z. Bordallo
Member of Congress


Aumua Amata Coleman Radewagen
Member of Congress


Gregorio Kilili Camacho Sablan
Member of Congress

Nydia M. Velázquez
Member of Congress

PRINTED ON RECYCLED PAPER

José E. Serrano
Member of Congress