



PRESS RELEASE
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Contact:
Anabel Evora—(305) 479-5718
Email: anabel.evora@hotmail.com

NPRC URGES HEALTH EQUALITY FOR PUERTO RICO

“We are on the verge of historic reforms – let’s do the job right”

WASHINGTON, DC (March 11) – The National Puerto Rican Coalition Inc. (NPRC) today urged Congress to adopt revisions to the pending health care reform legislation to better address the needs of U.S. citizens in Puerto Rico.

“We are on the verge of historic reforms, so let’s do the job right,” said NPRC President Rafael Fantauzzi, who urged revisions to the Senate version of the legislation, which he said currently prohibits Puerto Rican residents from participating in the new health insurance exchanges, fails to provide equitable funding for the Island’s Medicaid program and does not address long-standing funding disparities for Medicare on the Island.

Puerto Rico faces the same Medicaid mandates as states, but funding for the Territory’s Medicaid program is only 17 percent per capita of what states receive, Fantauzzi noted.

Under the Senate version of the legislation, Fantauzzi added, residents of Puerto Rico are prohibited from taking part in the health insurance exchanges, meaning that upwards of 400,000 uninsured will be deprived of equal access to health care.

In addition, the legislation fails to correct long-standing disparities in Medicare funding formulas for Puerto Rico.

“We join the vast majority of Americans in welcoming the long-overdue reforms envisioned by this historic legislation,” said NPRC Chairman Miguel Lausell, “but let’s use this opportunity to pass a measure that produces true equity for Puerto Rico.”

“It’s unfortunate that American citizens in the Territories continue to be an afterthought when it comes to health care, and this is Congress’ best chance to fix the problem,” said Fantauzzi. “They’re unlikely to revisit this issue in the near future,” said Fantauzzi.

“If Congress fails to act, it will force increased migration to the mainland, so that the burden of health care costs will continue to be shifted to states like Florida, New York, New Jersey, and Connecticut. It’s a case of fairness now or higher costs later,” Lausell noted.

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About NPRC

NPRC is a non-partisan 501 (c) (3) civil rights and advocacy organization whose mission is to strengthen the social, political, and economic well-being of Puerto Ricans throughout the United States and in Puerto Rico, with a special focus on the most vulnerable.