



January 10, 2020

Hon. Raúl Grijalva, President
House Committee on Natural Resources
United States House of Representatives
1324 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Congressman Grijalva:

The Puerto Rican Association of University Professors (*Asociación Puertorriqueña de Profesores Universitarios*, or APPU) thanks you and your colleagues for your recognition of the onerous effects of PROMESA on Puerto Rico, and your efforts on behalf of our island and its 117-year-old public university, which has been especially targeted for cutbacks by the Fiscal Oversight and Management Board. APPU represents nearly one thousand professors, counselors and librarians in UPR's 11 campuses.

It is a considerable relief to know that amendments to PROMESA, which we hope will alleviate the burden this law has placed on our University and our people, will be considered by the Committee you preside, and we wish to go on record in support of them.

In particular, APPU emphatically supports the addition of **SECTION 213 OF PROMESA, FOR OPERATION OF THE UNIVERSITY OF PUERTO RICO**, with the text:

“Until the termination of the Oversight Board for Puerto Rico pursuant to section 209, the Fiscal Plan for the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico and the Fiscal Plan for the University of Puerto Rico, developed under section 201, shall include an annual allocation of public funds to the University of Puerto Rico in an amount calculated under the funding formula of Law 2–1966 or \$800,000,000, whichever is greater, to allow the University of Puerto Rico to fulfill its major role as an essential public service and to comply effectively with its obligations and accreditation requirements.”

In the wake of the earthquakes of this past January 6-7, it is important to note that the Puerto Rico Seismic Network, a mainstay of any government—or private—earthquake-preparedness effort, is run by the UPR's Mayagüez campus, and has been subject to the same budgetary cuts which have decimated the UPR system as a whole, jeopardizing our flagship graduate programs and research initiatives, and forcing tuition increases that place an unacceptably heavy burden on our already-impooverished population.

Additionally, it is important to note the impact of investment in the University of Puerto Rico on the island's overall economic health: with multiplier effects of approximately 1.2, every million dollars that goes through the UPR budget results in \$1,200,000.00 in economic activity, a sizeable increase for public spending that also works in reverse: for every million dollars in cutbacks—

which the FOMB continues to call for—the island’s economy will contract by an additional \$200,000. In particular, Alameda and González’s 2017 study of UPR’s economic impact details the enormous importance of UPR’s regional campuses—especially Cayey, Utuado, Arecibo, Humacao and Mayagüez—to their local economies; closing or substantially downsizing these campuses, as has already begun to happen in Utuado, is a terrible blow to the towns where they are located. This contrasts dramatically with the high percentage of federal reconstruction funds that are channelled through non-Puerto Rican intermediary entities before “trickling down” to the island’s economy, although to our knowledge this multiplier has not yet been calculated.

We hope the proposed amendments will be approved by the House this year, and that PROMESA’s unbearable burden will be alleviated soon afterwards. Eventually, we expect that Congress will recognize the historic injustice that PROMESA has perpetrated, and eliminate it entirely.

However, we must emphasize that, if this amendment were not approved, UPR will face an additional \$86 million cutback for Fiscal Year 2020-21, which even UPR President Haddock has recognized would do irreparable harm to the University’s staff, students and programs. The FOMB, even as it recognizes that UPR is essential to any possibility of sustained economic recovery for Puerto Rico, has remained inflexible with regard to these cuts, with an ultimate goal of reducing government support for UPR to \$500 million. Therefore, we ask that you communicate directly to the FOMB the urgency of immediately reverting its disastrous prescriptions for UPR.

Sincerely,



Ángel Rodríguez Rivera, Ph.D, President
Puerto Rican Association of University Professors.

P.O. Box 22511
San Juan, Puerto Rico 00931-2511
787.758.8232
appu.nacional@gmail.com