

**Congress of the United States**  
Washington, DC 20515

April 9, 2025

The Honorable Chris Wright  
Secretary  
U.S. Department of Energy  
1000 Independence Avenue, SW  
Washington, DC 20585

Dear Secretary Wright:

We write to express our deep concern regarding delays in the deployment of critical funds from the Puerto Rico Energy Resilience Fund (PR-ERF). As you know, this Fund was established to strengthen energy resilience for individuals whose lives depend on electricity for lifesaving medical devices, such as dialysis machines, and for the proper storage of essential medications.<sup>1</sup> We are equally concerned about delays in deploying funds to address the post-disaster energy needs of multi-family housing properties, healthcare centers, dialysis centers, and diagnostic and treatment facilities.

Thanks to the leadership of the late Representative Raúl M. Grijalva, alongside 36 colleagues including then-Resident Commissioner Jenniffer González-Colón, Congress appropriated \$1 billion through the FY 2023 Consolidated Appropriations Act to establish the PR-ERF.<sup>2</sup> Lawmakers were explicit in requesting that these funds support rooftop solar and battery storage systems for individuals with electricity-dependent disabilities and medical conditions, who are especially vulnerable to frequent and prolonged power outages after natural disasters.

This request was made in response to both the proven reliability of rooftop solar and battery systems, which consistently preserved power during major storms,<sup>3</sup> and to direct appeals from residents across Puerto Rico urging Congress to lower the cost barriers for acquiring these systems. Their calls were supported by hundreds of stakeholders on the island—including non-profit groups, religious organizations, and local businesses—who emphasized the urgent need for distributed solar systems to protect residents against significant service disruptions after hurricanes and other natural disasters.<sup>4</sup> These stakeholders specifically emphasized the need for

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<sup>1</sup> Letter from Chairman Raúl M. Grijalva et al. to Speaker Nancy Pelosi & Chair Rosa DeLauro, Oct. 11, 2022, [https://democrats-naturalresources.house.gov/imo/media/doc/2022.10.11%20Grijalva%20et%20al%20Letter\\_Funding%20Rooftop%20Solar%20&%20Storage%20Solutions%20in%20Puerto%20Rico1.pdf](https://democrats-naturalresources.house.gov/imo/media/doc/2022.10.11%20Grijalva%20et%20al%20Letter_Funding%20Rooftop%20Solar%20&%20Storage%20Solutions%20in%20Puerto%20Rico1.pdf).

<sup>2</sup> Pub. L. No. 117-328, 136 Stat. 4459 (2022).

<sup>3</sup> Maria Espada, *Solar Power Is Helping Some Puerto Rico Homes Avoid Hurricane Fiona Blackouts*, TIME, Sept. 20, 2022, <https://time.com/6215138/solar-power-puerto-rico-hurricane-fiona/>

<sup>4</sup> Letters on file with Committee.

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rooftop solar systems to mitigate the disproportionate health impacts and mortality for elderly residents and residents with disabilities, as was seen during Hurricane María in 2017 and Hurricane Fiona in 2022.

We commend the Department's efforts in launching the Solar Access Program to support residential rooftop solar and battery installations and we strongly urge the Department to prioritize and accelerate these installations without delay. These systems are not just an energy source, they are a lifeline for families and individuals who cannot afford to be left without power when the grid fails. According to the Solar and Energy Storage Association (SESA) of Puerto Rico, recipients of solar will save over \$600 million on their electric bills over 20 years. We request that you ensure the program continues uninterrupted and that any hurdles to its swift implementation are addressed ahead of the hurricane season.

Similarly, we strongly urge the Department to expedite the release of funding from the Resilient Communities Program. We are concerned by recent reports<sup>5,6</sup> that the Department has not yet finalized agreements to release \$365 million under the program to enhance energy security in multi-family housing properties and community healthcare facilities through the deployment of solar and battery storage systems. For medical centers, these installations will help prevent over 140,000 hours of interrupted medical services, yield \$132 million in savings for healthcare providers, and generate over 6,750 jobs.<sup>7</sup> With hurricane season quickly approaching, any further delay risks severe consequences. In Puerto Rico, where power outages are frequent and backup power is often out of reach for many, the failure to deploy decentralized energy systems puts lives at risk.

Puerto Rico's energy system is the least reliable in the United States.<sup>8</sup> Delays in implementing rooftop solar and battery programs could have fatal consequences for thousands of residents. In the aftermath of natural disasters, relying on imported fuel and the ability to distribute power across damaged transmission lines will put last-mile and medically vulnerable communities at risk. The devastation caused by past hurricanes demonstrated how vulnerable Puerto Rico's power infrastructure is, particularly in communities located in rural mountainous and coastal regions. These areas were hit hardest by the recent storms and are still on the path toward recovery.

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<sup>5</sup> Melisa Hernández Cesani, *Hospitales levantan bandera por fondos de resiliencia energética federal*, Metro P.R., Mar. 26, 2025, <https://www.metro.pr/noticias/2025/03/26/hospitales-levantan-bandera-por-fondos-de-resiliencia-energetica-federal/>.

<sup>6</sup> Óscar J. Serrano, *Centros de salud alertan Energía federal los deja sin defensa ante temporada de huracanes*, NOTICEL, Mar. 26, 2025, <https://www.noticel.com/economia/top-stories/20250326/centros-de-salud-alertan-energia-federal-los-deja-sin-defensa-ante-temporada-de-huracanes/>.

<sup>7</sup> *Supra*.

<sup>8</sup> Gloria González, *Trump, Bad Bunny and Puerto Rico's Perennially Broken Power Grid*, Politico Mar. 30, 2025, <https://www.politico.com/news/magazine/2025/03/30/puerto-rico-electric-grid-blackouts-hurricanes-00257176>.

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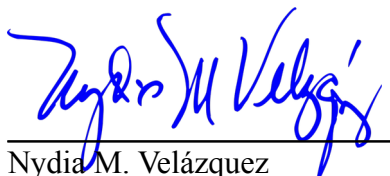
Rooftop solar paired with battery storage offers the most direct, reliable, and cost-effective solution for energy security in Puerto Rico. Tens of thousands of these systems are already in operation, producing 1.1 gigawatts of power and preventing up to 56 hours of lost load per year by supplying energy directly to homes before it can be drawn from the grid.<sup>9</sup> Households participating in the PR-ERF programs will build on this success, expanding the distributed energy network that has helped prevent brownouts and blackouts during times of high energy demand. The success of distributed rooftop solar and battery systems is further reflected through the groundbreaking Virtual Power Plant, in Puerto Rico, which relies on these systems and last year provided enough dispatchable energy to stave off blackouts. Smart inverter settings on new solar and battery systems also provide frequency regulation services that were previously thought possible only through fossil fuel plants. Furthermore, once approved, new rooftop solar and battery systems can be installed in a day, compared to months or years it has taken to install new centralized energy sources. Today, solar energy already prevents 25% of daytime blackouts.<sup>10</sup>

Every hurricane season we fail to act, we risk lives. The funding has been obligated, the technology exists, and the urgent need for these programs is clear. We call on the Department to move swiftly to fulfill the intent of Congress<sup>11</sup> and protect the people of Puerto Rico.

As part of these efforts, we request a briefing on the PR-ERF, including a general progress update, a timeline for finalizing agreements with conditional awardees, and a timeline for the first installations of solar and battery systems at healthcare facilities and multi-family housing.

Thank you for your attention to this urgent matter.

Sincerely,



Nydia M. Velázquez  
Member of Congress



Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez  
Member of Congress

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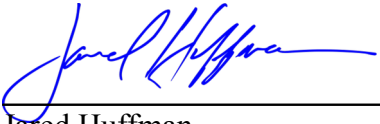
<sup>9</sup> LUMA Energy, *Puerto Rico Electrical System Resources Adequacy Analysis Report*, Oct. 31, 2024.

[https://energia.pr.gov/wp-content/uploads/sites/7/2024/10/20241031-MI20220002-Resource\\_Adequacy-1.pdf](https://energia.pr.gov/wp-content/uploads/sites/7/2024/10/20241031-MI20220002-Resource_Adequacy-1.pdf)

<sup>10</sup> Manuel Guillama Capella, *Sistemas de medición neta recortarán una cuarta parte de los apagones por falta de generación en 2025*, *El Nuevo Día*, Nov. 19, 2024. <https://www.elnuevodia.com/noticias/locales/notas/sistemas-de-medicion-neta-recortaran-una-cuarta-parte-de-los-apagones-por-falta-de-generacion-en-2025/>

<sup>11</sup> April 6, 2023, and December 1, 2023, letters from Members of Congress to Former Secretary Granholm regarding PR-ERF priorities. Letters on file with Committee

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Jared Huffman  
Member of Congress  
Ranking Member, House  
Natural Resources Committee



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Pablo José Hernández  
Member of Congress