



Congressman Pedro R. Pierluisi
Statement for the Record
Extension of Remarks
Introduction of Supplemental Security Income Equality Act
January 24, 2012

Mr./Madame Speaker:

Today, I introduced legislation that would extend SSI program to Puerto Rico and other territories.

SSI provides cash assistance to blind, disabled or elderly individuals who have no or limited income. Although SSI applies in the states, D.C. and one territory, it does not apply in Puerto Rico, which instead receives a block grant to assist its most vulnerable residents.

Of all the disparities that Puerto Rico faces because of its territory status, perhaps none is as unprincipled or harmful as its exclusion from SSI.

Puerto Rico's annual block grant is about \$35 million. By contrast, the nation's poorest state, with almost one million fewer residents, received over \$740 million in SSI funding in 2010, nearly 15 times more than Puerto Rico.

While the average monthly federal SSI payment is between \$400 and \$600, the average monthly payment to beneficiaries in Puerto Rico is about \$70, hardly enough to live on.

Residents of Puerto Rico are American citizens. But, when it comes to SSI, their citizenship is second class. I hope my colleagues on both sides of the aisle will support this bill.

Thank you, Mr./Madame Speaker. I yield back the balance of my time.