

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-5401

January 13, 2009

The Honorable Collin C. Peterson
Chairman
House Committee on Agriculture
1301 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Bob Goodlatte
Ranking Member
House Committee on Agriculture
1305 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Peterson and Ranking Member Goodlatte:

As Puerto Rico's sole representative in Congress, I write to respectfully request that the Committee spearhead efforts to include additional funding for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) in the economic stimulus package now under consideration, and to ask the Committee to ensure that any increase in funding for SNAP be complemented by an equivalent increase in funding for Puerto Rico's Nutrition Assistance Block Grant.

As you know, the Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act of 1981 removed Puerto Rico from the national Food Stamp program and established the Nutrition Assistance Program, known on the Island as PAN. The USDA's Food and Nutrition Service provides an annual block grant to the Puerto Rico government to operate the PAN program. This block grant covers the full cost of the benefits and 50% of the costs required to administer the program. In fiscal year 2009, the federal government will provide about \$1.7 billion to help over one million low-income families (roughly 460,000 households) on the Island make food purchases.

The goal of the SNAP and PAN programs—to help our most vulnerable citizens meet their basic nutritional needs—takes on special urgency during times of economic crisis. As more Americans find it harder to make ends meet, more will come to rely on these federal nutritional programs to feed themselves and their families. In addition, the economy is struggling and unemployment is rising due in large part to a sharp drop in demand for goods and services. One of the most efficient ways to bolster demand is to put money in the hands of people who will spend it quickly in order to cover basic expenses such as food. The House, and this Committee in particular, has clearly shown its recognition of these two facts. H.R. 7110, which this chamber passed in September 2008, contained \$2.7 billion for food stamp and nutrition programs and fully included the territories. I hope—and, on the basis of its prior action, am confident—that this Committee will make certain that the economic stimulus bill that is now under consideration includes a substantial increase in funding for food stamp and other nutrition programs, and that residents of Puerto Rico and the other territories will be treated on equal terms with their fellow citizens in the states.

I thank you for your attention to this matter and I am at your disposal should you require additional information.

Sincerely,



Pedro R. Pierluisi
Member of Congress

cc: The Honorable Joe Baca, Chairman, Subcommittee on Department Operations, Oversight, Nutrition, and Forestry

The Honorable Jo Bonner, Ranking Member, Subcommittee on Department Operations, Oversight, Nutrition, and Forestry