

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

January 30, 2009

Hon. Charles B. Rangel
Chairman
Committee on Ways and Means
1102 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Hon. Jim McDermott
Chairman
Subcommittee on Income Security
and Family Support
Committee on Ways and Means
B-317 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Rangel and Chairman McDermott:

As preparations begin to reconcile and revise H.R. 1, the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, we write to direct your attention to a provision of particular concern to us and to respectfully request your assistance to ensure that it is modified. As you know, Supplemental Security Income (SSI) is a federal income supplement program that provides assistance for food, clothing and shelter to aged, blind and disabled individuals who have limited or no income. Section 2102 of H.R. 1 would provide SSI recipients, within 120 days of the bill's enactment date, a one-time payment of \$450 per individual and \$630 per married couple.

The SSI program covers the needy aged, blind, and disabled population in the 50 States, the District of Columbia, and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands. However, the needy aged, blind, and disabled populations that we represent—in Puerto Rico, Guam, and the U.S. Virgin Islands—do not receive assistance under the SSI program. Instead, our neediest constituents—who would be eligible to receive SSI but for their residence—receive limited assistance from their respective territorial governments. Specifically, the federal grant program known as Aid to the Aged, Blind, and Disabled (AABD), which preceded the SSI program, continues to be administered by the local governments in Puerto Rico, Guam and the USVI. AABD, unlike SSI, is subject to matching fund requirements.

Section 2102, in its current form, does not provide additional funding to the AABD programs and thus would not assist our most vulnerable constituents. We believe this may have been an unintentional oversight and we appeal to you for a correction before the bill is finalized. We respectfully request that you consider amending Section 2102 to offer the same level of assistance to the needy aged, blind, and disabled population in Puerto Rico, Guam and the USVI that will be provided to SSI recipients in the 50 States,

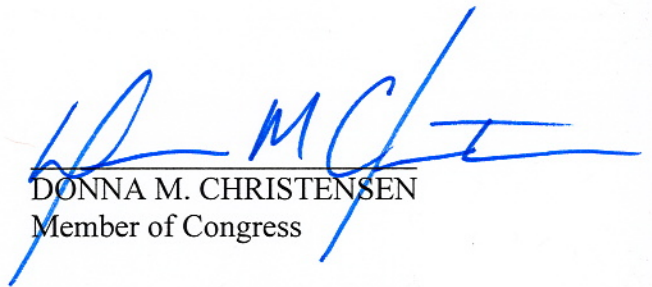
the District of Columbia, and the CNMI. Such assistance can be provided using the existing funding mechanism of the AABD programs, namely a one-time, block grant from HHS's Administration for Children and Families to each of the three territorial governments. We request that the additional amount provided to each territory be equal to \$450 multiplied by the sum of (1) the number of individuals in that territory who are receiving AABD assistance on the date of enactment and (2) the number of individuals in that territory who are not receiving AABD assistance at the time of enactment but who received AABD assistance for at least one day in the two month period that preceded the calendar month in which the territory last received its block grant.

We appreciate your leadership on behalf of the needy aged, blind and disabled community. We trust you will work to ensure that any assistance extended to that population residing in the 50 States, the District of Columbia and the CNMI will also be equitably extended to the needy U.S. citizens residing in our jurisdictions. We thank you in advance for your attention to this matter.

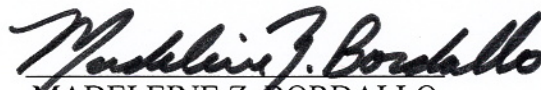
Sincerely,



PEDRO R. PIERLUISI
Member of Congress



DONNA M. CHRISTENSEN
Member of Congress



MADELEINE Z. BORDALLO
Member of Congress

cc: The Hon. Nancy Pelosi, Speaker of the House of Representatives
The Hon. Steny Hoyer, Majority Leader, House of Representatives
The Hon. James E. Clyburn, Majority Whip, House of Representatives
The Hon. John B. Larson, Chairman, House Democratic Caucus