

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

May 8, 2018

The Honorable Ricardo A. Rosselló Nevares  
Governor of Puerto Rico  
La Fortaleza  
P.O. Box 9020082  
San Juan, PR 00902-0082

Dear Governor Rosselló,

As Members of Congress, it is our role to ensure that all students regardless of race, ethnicity, language, country of origin, income, disability or immigration status have access to equitable educational opportunities. In that vein, we write to strongly oppose the impending closure of 280 public schools in Puerto Rico, which critically compromise access to education on the Island.

Today, Puerto Rico's residents continue struggling to recover from the devastation wrought by Hurricane Maria. The closure of such a large number of schools – that served as the feeding and supply distribution centers in the immediate aftermath of the storm - will displace students and families, and further destabilize communities.

The proposal to close 280 schools this summer comes less than one year after Puerto Rico closed 167 schools. This brings the total number of schools slated for closure to 450, nearly 35 percent of the total number of public schools on the island. These closures would affect some 66,000 students and teachers; it would have a disastrous impact on children's learning. Students will have to travel longer distances, and schools will expend more on transportation services, instead of books and learning materials.

The proposed school closings coincide with austerity measures certified in the most recent Fiscal Plan<sup>[1]</sup>: deep cuts to public services, an overhaul of workforce benefits, and dangerous reductions to retirement benefits. It is easy to empathize with families that have chosen to mobilize to areas with reliable electricity and access to more generous Federal benefits. The claim that closing these schools will yield the island an additional \$150 million<sup>[2]</sup> a year does not seem realistic given that currently, 50 previously closed schools are being leased for \$1 per year.<sup>[3]</sup> In fact, research indicates that municipalities receive only a fraction of the savings that they budget when they close schools.<sup>[4]</sup>

The proposed closings also coincide with plans to allow 80 charter schools to open, and public funds to be shifted to voucher schemes that will transfer these funds to unaccountable private schools.<sup>[5]</sup> This is unacceptable in a time of crisis and the closing of traditional public schools.

Puerto Rico's public schools have been the institutions that offer children stability in the aftermath of a disaster and continue to function as centers of community. We call on your Administration to institute a moratorium on all school closing until a full, fair, and transparent needs assessment is conducted and determines how to best provide Puerto Rico's students with

an equal opportunity to education. The long term health and recovery of Puerto Rico depends on it.

Sincerely,



Raúl M. Grijalva  
Member of Congress



Nydia M. Velázquez  
Member of Congress



Adriano Espaillat  
Member of Congress



Luis V. Gutiérrez  
Member of Congress



Mark Pocan  
Member of Congress



Mark Takano  
Member of Congress



Betty McCollum  
Member of Congress



Albio Sires  
Member of Congress



Alcee L. Hastings  
Member of Congress



Joaquin Castro  
Member of Congress



Carolyn B. Maloney  
Member of Congress



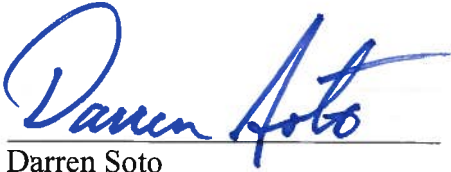
Lucille Roybal-Allard  
Member of Congress



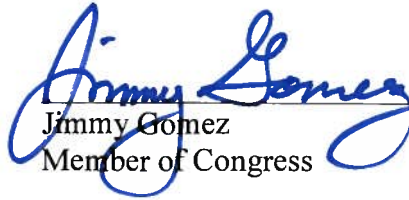
John Garamendi  
Member of Congress



Robert A. Brady  
Member of Congress



Darren Soto  
Member of Congress



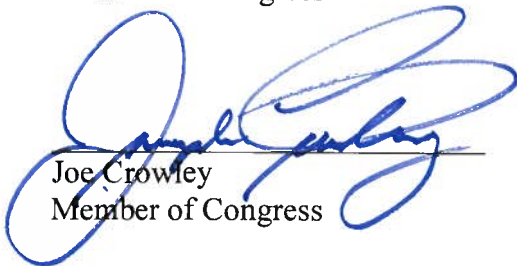
Jimmy Gomez  
Member of Congress



Kathy Castor  
Member of Congress



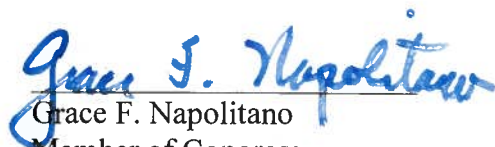
Suzanne Bonamici  
Member of Congress



Joe Crowley  
Member of Congress



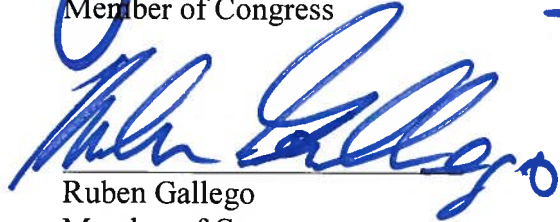
Debbie Dingell  
Member of Congress



Grace F. Napolitano  
Member of Congress



Jan Schakowsky  
Member of Congress



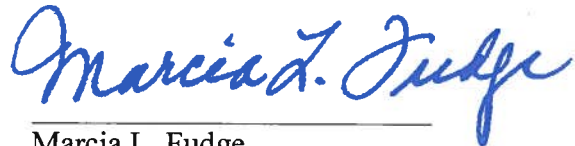
Ruben Gallego  
Member of Congress



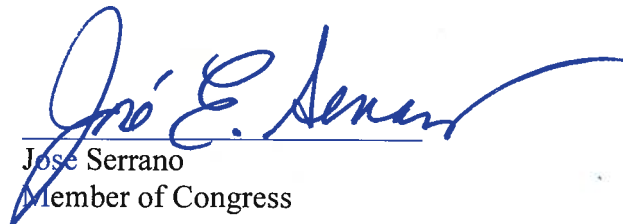
Brenda L. Lawrence  
Member of Congress



Rosa L. DeLauro  
Member of Congress



Marcia L. Fudge  
Member of Congress



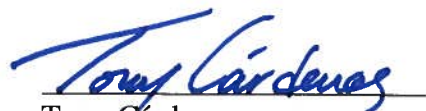
Jose Serrano  
Member of Congress



Michelle Lujan-Grisham  
Member of Congress



Juan Vargas  
Member of Congress



Tony Cárdenas  
Member of Congress



Donald Norcross  
Member of Congress



J. Luis Correa  
Member of Congress