

IMPROVE EQUITY AND FOOD SECURITY FOR THE PEOPLE OF PUERTO RICO

Puerto Rico is more than just a territory of the United States. The people of Puerto Rico are American citizens who contribute to the economic, cultural, and social fabric of our country. But today, Puerto Rico is still shaped by centuries of colonization and resistance. **Over 43% of Puerto Ricans struggle with poverty** — more than double that of Mississippi, the state with the highest poverty rate.

Congress cut Puerto Rico from the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP, formerly food stamps) in 1981, and instead authorized the limited and under-funded Nutrition Assistance Program (NAP). This disparity means that food assistance is capped at a set funding level instead of automatically expanding and contracting like SNAP does during economic downturns. **Under NAP, when more Puerto Ricans apply for assistance, they receive fewer benefits per household.**

NAP provides significantly less nutrition aid than SNAP — SNAP maximum allotments are roughly twice the NAP maximum benefit — and leaves Puerto Ricans uniquely vulnerable to food insecurity during natural disasters. **For example, in 2017 after the devastation of Hurricane Maria, those facing hunger in Puerto Rico had to wait six months to receive life-saving nutrition support.** Unlike SNAP, which allows states to automatically react when hunger rises due to natural disasters, NAP requires a vote from Congress to appropriate extra funds for emergency relief.



Puerto Rico's cost of living is

13% HIGHER than the U.S. national average

The average cost of food in the capital city of San Juan is

23% HIGHER than other U.S. cities



THE PEOPLE OF PUERTO RICO SHOULD BE ABLE TO ACCESS THE SAME NUTRITION ASSISTANCE AS THEIR **FELLOW AMERICAN CITIZENS** LIVING IN THE STATES.



For a 3-person household, the current maximum NAP benefit is

\$315 PER MONTH

which is 59% of the maximum SNAP benefit (\$535 per month)

ABOUT

1.5 MILLION



Puerto Ricans received NAP food assistance every month in 2021 — that's nearly half of the island's total population (about 3.3 million)

The Farm Bill must:

- ✓ Prioritize a timely and efficient plan for the transition of Puerto Rico from the inadequate NAP block grant back to SNAP.
- ✓ Authorize full funding for the transition from NAP to SNAP, estimated between \$341 and \$426 million.
- ✓ Ensure the transition to SNAP addresses Puerto Rico's unique realities and does not result in deeper inequity or the loss of food assistance from anyone facing food insecurity.

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