

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

November 10, 2009

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

The Honorable 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:

The Supplemental Security Income (SSI) program provides assistance to aged, blind and disabled individuals who have limited or no income. Because consumer prices went down this past year, monthly SSI benefits will not automatically increase in 2010. To ensure that the most vulnerable Americans are able to meet their basic living needs, President Obama has called for SSI recipients—along with Social Security recipients, railroad retirees, and certain veterans—to receive a \$250 payment. The Social Security Administration echoed the President's call on October 15th. We write to respectfully urge that you approve legislation authorizing these \$250 payments and that you ensure the neediest residents in our territories—Puerto Rico, Guam, and the U.S. Virgin Islands—are made eligible to receive such payments.

We were dismayed that when a similar payment was authorized in the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, our most vulnerable constituents were excluded. This was because ARRA provided payment to SSI recipients—among others—but did not account for the fact that the SSI program has not been extended to the U.S. citizens in our three territories. We believe—and hope—our exclusion was an unintentional oversight. If a \$250 payment is authorized in line with President Obama's request, and if the Committee intends to use ARRA as a template, we ask that it tweak the legislative language to fix this mistake. There is absolutely no principled basis for excluding our neediest residents—who would be eligible to receive SSI but for their residence—from receiving the same benefit as their fellow citizens in the 50 states, the District of Columbia and the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI), where the SSI program does apply.

As you know, 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 our three territories. Monthly payments to beneficiaries are considerably lower

under AABD than they are under SSI. We respectfully request that any legislation approved by the Committee offer the same level of assistance to the needy aged, blind, and disabled population in Puerto Rico, Guam and the USVI that would 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 program, namely a one-time, block grant from HHS's Administration for Children and Families to each of our three territorial governments. We ask that the additional amount provided to each territory be equal to \$250 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 as of the date of enactment, but who received AABD assistance for at least one day in the three-month period preceding the date of enactment. We also request that any matching requirements be waived in this instance, and that the receiving territorial governments be required to make timely payments to each individual accounted for in determining the one-time block grant.

We thank you in advance for your attention to this matter.

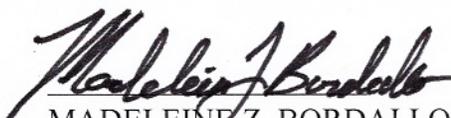
Sincerely,



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
The Hon. Xavier Becerra, Vice Chairman, House Democratic Caucus
The Hon. David R. Obey, Chairman, Committee on Appropriations