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January 22, 2015

The President
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

I want to congratulate you on a successful State of the Union address, during which you previewed a number of legislative proposals designed to empower hard-working American families and improve their quality of life. When your administration provides the details of these spending and tax proposals as part of the budget request that will be transmitted to Congress on February 2nd, I ask that your administration make clear that it intends for each of these proposals to extend to Puerto Rico and the other U.S. territories to the greatest degree feasible.

During your speech, you spoke eloquently about “middle-class economics,” which you defined as “helping working families feel more secure in a world of constant change.” As you explained: “That means helping folks afford childcare, college, health care, a home, retirement.” You said that your budget request “will address each of these issues, lowering the taxes of working families and putting thousands of dollars back into their pockets each year.”

Under your leadership, the United States has made a great deal of progress over the last several years. As you observed, the national economy is growing and creating jobs at the fastest pace since 1999. By contrast, the situation in Puerto Rico has been deteriorating, not improving. The island’s unemployment rate is 14.0 percent, compared to a national average of just 5.6 percent. In a territory with a population of 3.6 million, there are only 983,281 individuals who are working, which is about 47,000 fewer than there were two years ago. At least 72,000 island residents left Puerto Rico for the states in the first six months of 2014, which is a truly shocking figure.

The root cause of Puerto Rico’s economic and fiscal crisis is its territory status, which enables the federal government to treat my constituents worse than their counterparts in the states under key federal programs. Therefore, it is imperative that any new federal proposals intended to help American families be made applicable to Puerto Rico.

As I am sure you can imagine, I am looking forward to the day when Puerto Rico is a state, when the American citizens residing in Puerto Rico are treated equally as a matter of course, and when the island's representatives in Congress will no longer need to send letters to federal officials requesting equitable treatment for their constituents under existing federal programs or new federal initiatives.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Pierluisi".

Pedro R. Pierluisi
Member of Congress

cc: The Hon. Jerry Abramson, Director of Intergovernmental Affairs, Co-Chair, The President's Task Force on Puerto Rico's Status
The Hon. Stuart Delery, Acting Associate Attorney General, Co-Chair, The President's Task Force on Puerto Rico's Status