

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

July 24, 2009

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Speaker Pelosi:

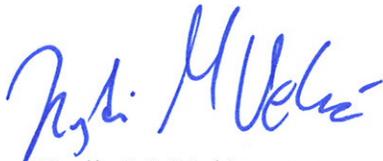
In the 111th Congress, the most promising effort we have seen in recent history is underway to make health care a reality for the millions of uninsured and under-insured in the United States. As representatives of diverse constituencies, we are prepared and eager to begin debate on this comprehensive health reform legislation. However, there is a real danger that this bill would create two different realities: one for Puerto Rico and the territories, and one for the rest of the country.

Madam Speaker, H.R. 3200, "America's Affordable Health Choices Act of 2009" may not bring affordable health insurance coverage to Puerto Rico and the territories' 4.5 million U.S. residents. This historic health legislation currently excludes residents of our territories from major initiatives intended to provide affordable access to health insurance. We understand the difficulties our caucus faces in dealing with the health care debate, and Puerto Rico and the territories present a challenge in the midst of addressing the needs of the country as a whole. However, the need for care among these U.S. citizens can not be ignored because they live far away, they are poor, or because it is too expensive.

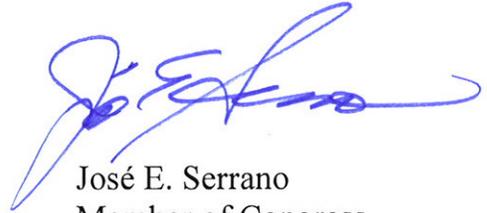
This serious omission has brought us together insisting that it be addressed before the bill is adopted. We all are extremely supportive of efforts to create health care parity for the people of Puerto Rico. The challenge of bringing affordable health care to the entire nation is a task of enormous complexity and difficulty, and the accomplishment of enacting this historical effort will be due in large part to your strong leadership. However, the true measure of success will be providing affordable coverage for all Americans, no matter where they live.

Regardless of how difficult or tempting it may be to cut the territories out of this health reform, it simply can not happen. It is our moral obligation to provide residents of the U.S. territories with the same opportunities as everyone else. Therefore, we stand together in asking that Puerto Rico be treated as a State and included as part of the health care reform bill, H.R. 3200.

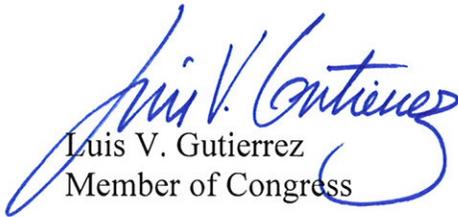
Sincerely,



Nydia M. Velázquez
Member of Congress



José E. Serrano
Member of Congress



Luis V. Gutierrez
Member of Congress



Pedro R. Pierluisi
Member of Congress