Health Care Funding in Puerto Rico and US Virgin Islands: Baseline structural problems

- Health care funding in US Territories was in profound crisis before Hurricane Irma and Hurricane Maria.
- Intensive discussions of what Executive Branch could do in 2015 and 2016. Primary conclusion was that legislative action is needed.
- Core problems are:
  - Capped structure to Medicaid funding
  - Federal match that is lower than most other states despite lower incomes in territories.
  - This problem THEN made worse by loss of temporary cap increase for Medicaid expansion.
- All of this means that territories had less than zero capacity to take on health care costs of natural disasters.
Various national Latino and health care organizations have been coordinating on advocacy for Congress to act on crisis.

- December 18th sign-on letter to Congressional leaders.
  - Signed by Families USA and 125 community, provider, labor, and patient organizations
- Letter asks Congress to:
  1. Temporarily increase PR and USVI federal Medicaid matching rate to 100 percent. (Katrina precedent)
  2. Provide 100% Medicaid match for evacuees to other states (Katrina precedent)
  3. Medicaid eligibility simplification (Katrina and 9/11 precedent)
    - Attestation-based Medicaid Eligibility
    - Simplified applications and delayed redeterminations (also 2014 precedent!)
  4. Funding for health care reconstruction
Continuing Resolution failed to include Puerto Rico and VI healthcare relief
Looking toward supplemental bill
House bill limited on four Medicaid asks
Remember—these proposals only provide modest temporary relief for a structurally unsound and unfair Medicaid financing system.
Long-term, sustainable fix requires full Medicaid and Medicare parity for the 3.5 million American citizens living in Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands.