

POLICY PRIORITIES **for Puerto Rico in 2026**



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President and CEO of Hispanic Federation
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Message from Frankie Miranda

PRESIDENT AND CEO OF HISPANIC FEDERATION

Hispanic Federation has more than 35 years of experience working tirelessly to empower Latino communities in across the United States. We originated from the desire of the Puerto Rican diaspora to stand up for all Latinos. Since 2017, Hispanic Federation's priority in Puerto Rico has been to support a just, sustainable recovery. To that end, we have worked with more than 160 local non-profits and invested over \$60 million in private funding. Additionally, we strive to amplify the voices of historically marginalized communities and to support, train, and partner with local organizations that promote human dignity and work towards a more equitable society. See our report, [Building a Stronger and More Resilient Puerto Rico, Hurricane Maria: A Five-Years Update, September 2022](#).

In light of Puerto Rico's historic and ongoing challenges, policy issues should address political, social, and economic inequalities which have deepened the vulnerability of its residents in the face of natural disasters and emergencies. Puerto Rico has not yet recovered from the catastrophic aftermath of Hurricane María in 2017, and in the years since has faced hurricanes, earthquakes, tropical storms, floods, and a global pandemic. All the while Puerto Rico has a persistent poverty rate of over 40 percent and an average income lower than in any state of the U.S., exacerbated by the austerity measures imposed by a Financial Oversight and Management Board that was not elected by the people. Unfortunately, this social, environmental, and economic stress has forced many families to make the hard decision to leave Puerto Rico for the states and keeps the Puerto Ricans in the diaspora from returning to their homeland. Nevertheless, there exists a willing and capable community in both the archipelago and the diaspora to build the Puerto Rico we all want.

Informed by this perspective, our policy and advocacy work in Puerto Rico uses a holistic approach to address local and federal issues in the following areas: planning and community development, agriculture and food security, energy and critical services, economic development, democracy and civic engagement, immigration, health, civil and human rights, environmental and climate justice, and education.

Today, as president and CEO of the Hispanic Federation, I am proud to present our public policy priorities for Puerto Rico in 2026, based on the work we have done since 2017 in close collaboration with our network of community and non-profit organizations on the archipelago. The feedback, knowledge, and experience of each of these organizations has been crucial in determining priorities that reflect the real needs of the communities they serve. For that reason, **I hope this report helps advance a participatory dialogue with elected and appointed public officials to identify opportunities for collaboration and social change.**

Sincerely,



Executive Summary

The report outlines **Hispanic Federation's** local and federal policy priorities for Puerto Rico. In turn, we hope to foster a participatory dialogue between public officials and the network of community and non-profit organizations with whom these priorities were developed. Hispanic Federation's public policy work in Puerto Rico is guided by the pillars of human rights, resilience, justice, equity, and sustainable development that equitably balances short and long-term social, economic and environmental interests. At the same time, we encourage essential mechanisms for good governance and accountability, such as transparency, citizen participation, access to public information, and civic engagement.

In summary, given the complexity of Puerto Rico's economic, social, and environmental challenges, we have adopted a holistic approach based on the following priority policy areas:

- **Planning and Community Development:** We work to promote sustainable development, protect the right to housing, avoid displacement, and guarantee access to critical services within communities.
- **Agriculture and Food Security:** We work to strengthen food sovereignty, safeguard against hunger, advance the right to food security, increase local production, support small farmers and fishers, reduce imports, and minimize the environmental footprint.
- **Energy and Critical Services:** We work to save lives by guaranteeing fair and equitable access to energy and other critical services in the most vulnerable communities in Puerto Rico. We also strive to achieve a transition to 100% renewable energy and prioritize solar energy that fosters resilience and energy justice.
- **Economic Development:** We work to promote sustainable and local development that prioritizes economic development driven by the community, small businesses, and fair access to local and federal funding.
- **Democracy and Civic Engagement:** We work to ensure representative democratic elections as well as Puerto Rico's self-determination. Beyond elections, we endeavor to promote participatory, transparent, and data-based decision making that fosters equity and accountability.
- **Immigration:** We work to highlight the unmet needs of the immigrant community in Puerto Rico and protect their human rights and dignity.
- **Health/Women's Reproductive Rights:** We work to promote fair access to health services. Additionally, we advocate to secure women's reproductive rights as an essential health service. This empowers the struggle against gender violence and discrimination and supports equity as a social pillar in our communities.
- **Civil and Human Rights:** We work to eliminate any type of discrimination against people's dignity and human rights.
- **Environmental and Climate Justice:** We work to promote sustainable development that prioritizes the protection of ecological and agricultural lands, coasts and maritime-terrestrial zones, environmental justice, and mitigation of and adaptation to Climate Change.
- **Education:** We work to promote equitable access to education. Among other things, we advocate for resilience in schools to ensure future emergencies and disasters do not disrupt routine education.

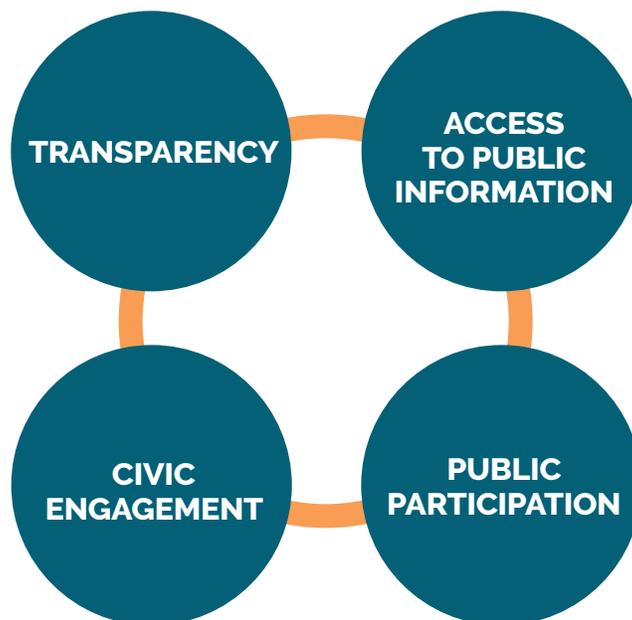
In the following sections, Hispanic Federation details local and federal priorities in each of the above policy areas in Puerto Rico.

Pillars and Mechanisms for Good Governance

Pillars guiding our policy work in PR



Mechanisms for good governance and accountability



Planning and Community Development

We work to promote sustainable development, protect the right to housing, avoid displacement, and guarantee access to critical services within communities.

Context

Through planning and community development, we strive to improve people's quality of life and increase local opportunities. This includes fair access to basic needs and services such as housing. There is a public consensus that Puerto Rico is facing a housing crisis. The inventory of affordable housing is insufficient, and high rental and purchase costs keep residents from meeting their permanent housing needs, undermining their right to adequate, affordable housing. This crisis affects vulnerable communities disproportionately, causes displacement, and must be addressed with the urgency it deserves.

Local policy priorities

- **Regulate short-term rentals*** to create a fair balance between the benefits of this commercial activity and the right to housing and communities' right to stay.
 - Legislation must be adopted to regulate short-term rentals as commercial, rather than residential use, in keeping with their purpose and community impact.
 - See our report: [Proposals for reducing the impact of short-term rentals on community displacement, El Enjambre and Hispanic Federation, July 2023.](#)
 - See our event: ["Nos Quedamos: Alternativas justas para regular los arrendamientos a corto plazo en Puerto Rico"](#) [We are staying: Fair alternatives to regulate short-term rentals in Puerto Rico].
- **Fair and effective use of CDBG-DR/MIT recovery funds** managed by the Puerto Rico Department of Housing, in a way that addresses the housing crisis, avoids displacement, ensures fair access to critical services, and promotes sustainable community development.
 - This includes dealing with the lack of alignment between mitigation and recovery projects.
- Achieve **the revitalization of vacant properties** such that they may be included in the affordable housing inventory.
- **Adopt renters' protections**, such as rent control and anti-discrimination policies.
- **A Joint Regulation ("Reglamento Conjunto")** that ensures sustainable community development.

Federal priorities

- Ensure that the process of adopting and implementing the **Interim Final Rule for Equity in FEMA's Individual Assistance Program is completed.**
- Request FEMA provide a Spanish translation of the updated **Individual Assistance Program Policy Guide (IAPPG).**
- **Ensure continuity of the PR FEMA Working Group** as a space for dialogue and collaboration between local non-profits and FEMA.
- Successfully facilitate the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's (HUD) creation of a **PR HUD Working Group** in direct collaboration with local non-profits.

Agriculture and Food Security

We work to strengthen food sovereignty, safeguard against hunger, advance the right to food security, increase local production, support small farmers and fishers, reduce imports, and minimize the environmental footprint.

Context

Puerto Rico imports nearly 85% of its food. In the aftermath of Hurricane María, imports were estimated to reach 95% due to the destruction of agricultural farms. High dependence on food imports has had an adverse economic, social, and environmental impact. In particular, this dependence has worsened food insecurity and its consequences on public health. Furthermore, it has reduced access to sufficient and nutritious foods, especially in historically marginalized and impoverished communities. This food insecurity is further exacerbated by a inaccessibility of economic resources and critical services, climate change, inequity in nutritional assistance policies, and restrictions imposed by the Jones Act, among other local and federal institutional barriers.

Local policy priorities

- The Puerto Rico Department of Agriculture should adopt a **Uniform Guidance to obtain the Bonafide Farmer Certification*** to promote fair and equitable access to its benefits among a larger group of local farmers and fishers. This should be done through a participatory process in collaboration with agricultural regions and various stakeholders, such as the members of the **Agricultural Public Policy Table**.
- Increase access to land by creating a **public inventory of agricultural lands** and adhering to the Puerto Rico Land Use Plan to ensure their protection.
- **Support the fishing sector** by increasing participatory collaboration with fishing associations to sustainably manage local fisheries.
- Improve and expand **agricultural insurance coverage**.
- **Strengthen the Family Market Programs** to, among other things, increase participation by local farmers and beneficiaries of the federal nutritional assistance program (NAP).
- Promote **government collaboration with community and non-profit organizations** that support local food production.
- **Strengthen agricultural education programs** at elementary, high school, and college levels.

Federal priorities

- Increase **USDA and NOAA resources and technical support** to farmers and fishers in PR.

Energy and Critical Services

We work to save lives by guaranteeing fair and equitable access to energy and other critical services in the most vulnerable communities in Puerto Rico. We also strive to achieve a transition to 100% renewable energy and prioritize solar energy that fosters resilience and energy justice.

Context

Puerto Rico is in the midst of one of the most important stages in the transition of its electric power system. Decisions made today will affect the environmental, social, and economic future of present and future generations. Federal recovery funds present a unique opportunity to achieve a transition to 100% renewable energy along with resilience and energy justice in the communities.

Local policy priorities

- Ensure that the evaluation and approval process of the **Integrated Resource Plan (IRP)*** of the Puerto Rico Electric Power Authority/LUMA is truly transparent and participatory. At the same time, ensure that the IRP integrates the energy policy priorities listed below.
- Prioritize **energy justice** in decision-making:
 - Ensure **fair and equitable access to energy resiliency** for everyone in Puerto Rico.
 - Ensure **energy democracy** by integrating communities into all phases of decision making related to the projects that impact them.
 - Adopt and implement the principles of energy justice established in the **PR 100** study by the U.S. Department of Energy.
- Maintain and comply with public policy regarding the transition to **100% renewal energy by 2050, prioritizing the integration of solar energy.**
- Ensure that energy projects promote **sustainable land use**:
 - Prioritize **renewal energy projects on rooftops or previously impacted areas.**
 - **Avoid the use of agricultural lands or nature reserves** in the development of large-scale energy projects.
 - **Guarantee each project complies with local and federal environmental laws and regulations**, including the Puerto Rico Land Use Plan.
- **Make informed decisions** based on participatory processes that ensure people's energy needs are met, energy research studies already developed in PR, such as [PR100](#), [Puerto Rico Distributed Energy Resource Integration Study](#), [The Longest Power Blackout in History and Energy Poverty](#), and analysis by the Puerto Rico Energy Bureau (PREB), among others.
- Respect the PREB's independence.

Federal priorities

- Expand access to **federal renewable energy tax credits for PR.***
- **Maintain and enhance support from relevant federal agencies** (e.g., DOE, EPA, FEMA, and HUD) to achieve the transition to 100% renewable energy, prioritizing solar energy that fosters resilience and energy justice.

Economic Development

We work to promote sustainable and local development that prioritizes economic development driven by the community, small businesses, and fair access to local and federal funding.

Context

Since 2017, Puerto Rico has experienced hurricanes, earthquakes, tropical storms, floods, and a global pandemic, among other challenges. All these disasters have revealed the complex economic, social, political, and environmental vulnerabilities of the archipelago. During the last decade, Puerto Rico has experienced a steady poverty rate of over 40 percent, with a lower average income than any state in the U.S., austerity measures imposed by an unelected Financial Oversight and Management Board, and a dramatic 11.8 percent decrease in population from 2010 to 2020, with an additional decrease of 2.4 percent from 2020 to 2023.

Local policy priorities

- Adopt a **Local Child Tax Credit (CTC)**.^{*} As explained in the proposal of [Instituto del Desarrollo de la Juventud \(IDJ\)](#), [Institute of Youth Development] this credit offers a reimbursable tax break of \$1,000-\$1,800 that a family with at least one dependent minor under 6 years of age may claim when filing their tax return. The amount of credit scaled based on annual income, up to \$26,000 per year. Adopting this credit will improve family economic mobility and help decrease childhood poverty.

Federal priorities

- **Parity and equity in all anti-poverty federal programs**, such as the Child Tax Credit (CTC), the federal Supplementary Nutritional Assistance Program (SNAP), Supplemental Social Security (SSI), and Medicaid. In particular, we prioritize:
 - Achieve Puerto Rico's transition **from NAP to SNAP**^{*} in the new federal Farm Bill.
 - Avoid the depletion of **Medicaid** funds in 2027.
 - Change the **CTC** guidelines to ensure parity for taxpayers residing in Puerto Rico, in line with the policy proposal of [Instituto del Desarrollo de la Juventud \(IDJ\)](#) [Institute of Youth Development] and other stakeholders.
 - Overrule the **Insular Cases** that support systemic discrimination of the federal government against Puerto Rico.
- **Eliminate federal barriers and policies** that prevent non-profits and small businesses from accessing federal funding and programs.
 - Among other things, we urge federal agencies **not to discriminate against non-profits that promote equity and social justice**.
 - **Eliminate cost-matching requirements for federal grants** when the main applicant is an eligible non-profit or government agency and the projects mainly serve, and directly benefit, the residents of disadvantaged low-income communities, U.S. territories and/or tribal communities.
 - **Allow for the direct disbursement of funds** (drawdown) to organizations with a positive record of compliance, execution, and community impact.

Democracy and Civic Engagement

We work to ensure representative democratic elections as well as Puerto Rico's self-determination. Beyond elections, we endeavor to promote participatory, transparent, and data-based decision making that fosters equity and accountability.

Context

For decades, Puerto Rico has held the proud distinction of having an electoral model that is globally recognized for its guarantees of liberty and justice. Voting is the most essential exercise in a democracy. Unfortunately, recent electoral processes have faced challenges that must be addressed before the next elections. These reforms become all the more urgent given the ongoing need for authorization from an unelected Financial Oversight and Management Board to make decisions for the people. At the same time, a democratic election of a government is not a "blank check" of power. Once elected, public officials have the responsibility of maintaining the greatest degree possible of transparency, public participation, and accountability in government decision making.

Local policy priorities

- We advocate the creation and elaboration of **critical data to foster equity and accountability**, such as public tracking in real time of the use of federal funds, as well an objective analysis of the real impact that they have on our people.
- Ensure accountability and public participation in decision making related to CDBG-DR and CDBG-MIT recovery funds through the **Citizen Advisory Committee**.
- Optimize the **Transparency Portal** of the Puerto Rico Department of Housing to assess if said funds are reaching the areas where they are most needed.
- Maintain and increase guarantees under the **Transparency and Expedited Procedure for Public Information Access Act**.

Federal priorities

- **We will advocate for the sunset of the PROMESA Act and the Financial Oversight and Management Board,** along with a transparent, independent review of the board's actions, ensuring a responsible transition from its control and information to the government of Puerto Rico.
- We will advocate for the elimination of any barriers that may prevent our communities from being counted in the **2030 Census**. Additionally, we will endeavor to obtain better economic data on Puerto Rico and to ensure that Puerto Rico is included in the American Housing Survey.

Other Policy Priorities for Puerto Rico

Immigration

We work to highlight the unmet needs of the immigrant community in Puerto Rico and protect their human rights and dignity.

- We will require the Puerto Rico Department of State to increase and enhance the services offered through its **Office of Immigrant Services**.
- We will advocate for the **government of Puerto Rico to protect and uphold the civil rights of the immigrant community, including forestalling voluntary collaboration between local government and federal immigration enforcement agencies beyond legal requirements.**
- We advocate for **community integration and trust, and immigrants' access to basic services by advancing policies to protect sensitive spaces**, such as hospitals, schools, churches, and courts, among others.

Health/Women's Reproductive Rights

We work to promote fair access to health services. Additionally, we advocate to secure women's reproductive rights as an essential health service. This empowers the struggle against gender violence and discrimination and supports equity as a social pillar in our communities.

- We will advocate for the protection of the rights acquired by women and ensure **fair and equitable access to essential reproductive health services.**

Civil and Human Rights

We work to eliminate any type of discrimination against people's dignity and human rights.

- We will advocate for the rights, respect and dignity of communities that are unjustly marginalized by the system. In particular, **we will advocate for the protection and expansion of the rights of the LGBTQ+ community.**

Environmental and Climate Justice

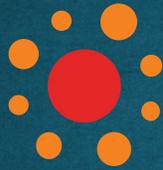
We work to promote sustainable development that prioritizes the protection of ecological and agricultural lands, coasts and maritime-terrestrial zones, environmental justice, and mitigation of and adaptation to Climate Change.

- We will advocate for the approval and implementation of the **Puerto Rico Climate Change Mitigation, Adaptation, and Resilience Plan.**

Education

We work to promote equitable access to education. Among other things, we advocate for resilience in schools to ensure future emergencies and disasters do not disrupt routine education.

- We will advocate for **minimizing the time students spend outside of school due to disasters** and ensuring that schools have the infrastructure, human resources, training, equipment, and technology needed to achieve this. At the same time, we will require school adaptation plans be developed **with the participation of the school community.**



hispanicfederation
C♥N PUERTO RICO

PUERTO RICO OFFICE

667 Calle La Paz, Suite 201

San Juan, PR 00907

Telephone: 787.417.7700

prinfo@hispanicfederation.org

HISPANIC FEDERATION OFFICES

Headquarters in New York City

California

Connecticut

Florida

Illinois

North Carolina

Washington DC