

2026 FEDERAL POLICY PRIORITIES

Spotlight on **PUERTO RICO**

IMMIGRATION

Federal Immigration Operations

Recent, indiscriminate dragnet enforcement operations conducted by the federal government have led to widespread community disruptions, severe economic damage, and numerous deaths, including of U.S. citizens.

- *For instance: As of November 2025, federal immigration agencies had made 1,431 arrests in Puerto Rico alone, of which only 166 were for criminal charges, while 1,265 were on an administrative basis, such as lack of documents.*
- **Hispanic Federation urges Congress to impose meaningful guardrails on federal immigration enforcement operations, including standard protocols for clearly visible identification, restoring pre-arrest approval and judicial warrant requirements, and accountability measures for violations of protocol, including disciplinary actions and review panels.**

Due Process

The Administration's enforcement efforts have encroached heavily on constitutional rights, perhaps none more so than the right to due process under the law. More than 400 judges have ruled roughly 4,500 of recent instances of immigrant detention illegal, an unsurprising outcome in the face of revelations like DHS guidance instructing agents to circumvent the need for signed judicial warrants for home entry.

- *For instance: DHS detained and deported a man under expedited removal who had lived in Puerto Rico for more than 20 years with a work permit, a multiyear pending immigration case, and an American citizen wife and children.*
- **Hispanic Federation demands Congress take steps to restore basic constitutional right to due process for those entailed within federal enforcement operations, including timely legal representation, fair hearings, and vetted review processes to regularly assess detention legality and necessity.**

Detention Overhaul

A rapid expansion of detention infrastructure has led to widespread reports of harm amid unsafe conditions. The last year has seen new records broken in fatalities among those held in immigration detention, while the number of those held without criminal convictions has risen 25-fold. As the ranks of those detained expands rapidly, communities, news outlets, and lawmakers alike have reported horrifying conditions, including woefully inadequate access to medical treatment and rampant sexual abuse.

- *For instance: one Puerto Rican man detained at Camp East Montana, Texas, spent 219 days – a full sixty percent of a year – held in a facility that has faced repeated allegations of medical and use of force violations, despite a “totally clean” record.*
- **Hispanic Federation exhorts Congress implement measures reforming the conditions and processes of immigrant detention like suspending the practice of family separation, enforcing standards of access to hygiene and health care, and creating enforceable mechanisms by which detainees may report abuses.**

PROGRAM SPOTLIGHT: Plaza de Mercado Rio Piedras is home to 200 small agricultural and food vendors. As Puerto Rico's primary distribution center for agriculture, electric power outages cause thousands of dollars

in product spoilage and threaten the livelihood of hundreds of mostly immigrant vendors and their families. As the principal source of financial support for these families, constant outages resulted in operational disruptions and business closures. In 2018, the Hispanic Federation and partners made an investment of \$790,000 for the installation of a rooftop solar energy and battery system, and energy efficient lighting throughout the Plaza, providing enough energy for hundreds of people.

HEALTH CARE

Health Care Access

Recent legislative and executive action are poised to strip health care coverage from upwards of 11 million Americans, which will prove catastrophic not only to vulnerable communities but also underlying health care infrastructure that supports all Americans from home to school to the workplace.

- *Medicaid in Puerto Rico has been woefully underfunded for decades. While states can have a Federal Medical Assistance Percentage (FMAP) up to 83 percent, and other US territories have the same FMAP, Puerto Rico's FMAP is 76 percent, combined with a block grant that does not respond to beneficiaries' health needs. If Congress does not take action, Puerto Rico will face a Medicaid Cliff in 2027, reducing this percentage from 76 to 55, simultaneously reducing its capped allotment, impacting approximately half of the population. Combined with a high poverty rate, and lack of parity in other federal safety net programs, such as SNAP and SSI, these developments would prove devastating.*
- **Hispanic Federation demands Congress reverse looming and actualized funding cuts to key health care access programs and to help secure permanent Medicaid parity for Puerto Rico by increasing funding, strengthening Medicaid infrastructure, and ensuring effective use of federal funds to meet the real health needs of the most vulnerable citizens in Puerto Rico.**

Vaccines

Repeated real-world trials and biological theory render it indisputable that vaccines work. Mass immunization campaigns reduce incidence of illness and hospitalization, supporting healthy, productive living for all, including those living with immunocompromising conditions.

- *Effective public health strategy in Puerto Rico led to the highest vaccination rate in the U.S. amid the covid-19 pandemic, helping to mitigate the worst of its consequences in the archipelago.*
- **Hispanic Federation thereby urges Congress to redouble its commitment to vaccination as an essential pillar of public health through policies including public information and outreach campaigns, and proper funding for vaccines, immunizations, and research support.**

Health Care Provider Resources

Our communities rely on access to well-funded health care facilities and well-trained medical professionals. Reductions in federal funding going to health care facilities, particularly rural health care facilities, and proposed caps to federal financial aid for graduate students pursuing degrees like nursing are likely to lead to diminished availability of health resources.

- *For instance, in 2024, Puerto Rico had approximately 9,000 active physicians in the archipelago, half the number there were in 2004 for a population of 3.2 million. At that moment, at least 6,000 more professionals were needed to meet the island's health care needs. The shortage is not only of physicians, but also of nurses, technologists, and therapists who are leaving the island.*
- **Hispanic Federation exhorts Congress to appropriate wider, targeted funding to support the staffing and maintenance of health care facilities for underserved and rural communities and to reduce cost barriers for all students pursuing degrees in health care.**

PROGRAM SPOTLIGHT: Since 2017, HF has provided millions of dollars to Federally Qualified Health Centers to procure and install solar panels and Tesla batteries designed to provide back-up energy in cases of electrical grid failure. Now, more than a dozen FQCH's operate with stability and resiliency because of these health infrastructure investments.

AI AND TECH

Digital Infrastructure Investments that Expand Access and Opportunity

Only two in three Hispanic adults have home broadband and a computer at home, leaving millions disconnected. The bipartisan Digital Equity Act was poised to close longstanding gaps in internet access and digital skills, yet the administration has moved to dismantle it before its promise could be realized.

- *For instance, in Puerto Rico, nearly one in four households still lack broadband access. For vulnerable communities, especially older adults, people with disabilities, low-income families, and rural or isolated communities, lack of internet access means less access to education, jobs, basic services, and emergency aid.*
- **Hispanic Federation urges Congress to expand broadband programs and digital infrastructure investments through the Digital Equity Act, the BEAD program, Universal Service Fund and to create a replacement for the Affordable Connectivity Program. These programs empower everyone in this country with the tools and connectivity required to access jobs, health care, education, and essential government services.**

Federal AI Governance that Protects the Rights, Safety, and Opportunities of Hispanic Communities and All Americans

AI systems are already making consequential decisions impacting Latino communities. Our communities need AI guardrails that protect civil rights, secure data privacy, and ensure systems are transparent, accountable, and independently audited. The unregulated development and widespread deployment of artificial intelligence have left communities vulnerable to the impacts of algorithmic discrimination, privacy violations, and serious safety concerns.

- *Puerto Rico operates under a federal court-enforced consent decree that has governed the Puerto Rico Police Bureau (PRPB) since 2013. That consent decree remains in effect today. In this unresolved accountability environment, the Municipality of San Juan in 2024 deployed AI-integrated surveillance software across nine major roadways, pairing government-owned security cameras with license plate recognition technology capable of real-time vehicle identification, image capture, and database matching – with no public transparency requirements, no disparate-impact assessment, and no independent audit before deployment.*
- **Hispanic Federation calls on Congress to enact comprehensive federal AI governance legislation that establishes strong civil rights protections, strengthens data privacy safeguards, and ensures AI systems are transparent, accountable, and evaluated on their real world-impacts for Latino communities and all Americans.**

AI Literacy and Workforce Development

As AI reshapes industries and the skills employers demand, Latino workers risk being left behind without targeted investments in the education and training programs that build digital fluency and career readiness.

- *For instance, Puerto Rico's workforce is concentrated in sectors now facing rapid automation-driven restructuring, compounding an existing digital skills gap: only 51.8 percent of Puerto Rican households have fixed broadband, leaving a significant share of the workforce without reliable access to online training or upskilling. With more than 90 percent of jobs requiring digital skills, this gap risks further leaving Puerto Rico's economy ever further behind.*

- Hispanic Federation urges Congress to invest in AI literacy and workforce development programs that equip Hispanic communities and all Americans with the capacity to fully engage in a rapidly changing digital economy, including education and workforce funding for traditional and nontraditional students, as well as workers in at-risk industries, partnerships with Hispanic-Serving Institutions, and initiatives that expand Latino representation beyond end users into the AI field itself.

PROGRAM SPOTLIGHT: Since 2020, HF has provided training in digital workforce skills to tens of thousands of people — including thousands in AI literacy since 2024 — helping similar numbers secure employment, and has connected CBOs with state broadband offices to expand digital access across the nation.

NONPROFIT PROTECTIONS

Nonprofit community-based organizations play essential roles in the communities they serve, filling vital service niches in their local areas by addressing gaps in services from governmental and for-profit providers. Over the past few years, the nonprofit sector has contributed approximately \$2 trillion to the GDP, providing essential services to address gaps in each of the areas discussed above.

- *For instance, the Federation's network of COVID-19 grantees, which had an estimated combined reach of more than 10 million people annually, was able to deliver emergency services, including food and housing assistance and health care, to some of the most overlooked and vulnerable communities during times of crisis, including individuals without health insurance, undocumented and mixed-status families, children and youth, pregnant women, domestic violence survivors, farmworkers, day laborers, and seniors.*
- *Likewise, Hispanic Federation's Lucha Contra El Hambre hunger relief effort focused on boosting food support to families throughout New York, Florida, and Illinois. Since its inception in 2011, the program has provided more than 1,250,000 fresh, healthy and culturally-responsive meals to Latinos in New York alone through our network of 71 non-profit member organizations across the city. In Puerto Rico, HF piloted a new preparedness program in 20 municipalities to stock 23 community kitchens with a three-day emergency supply of nonperishable food. These community-managed kitchens that provide hot meals after disasters committed to store the food through the end of hurricane season, only to be used in case of emergency.*
- **Hispanic Federation implores Congress and executive officials alike to protect and support vital community-driven, nonprofit funding and 501c3 status.**

PROGRAM SPOTLIGHT: In just 2025, Hispanic Federation provided training to more than 1,200 nonprofit leaders across 40 different capacity building workshops. At the same time, we provided community-based organizations across the country with more than \$25 million in aid, distributed to more than 400 different organizations.



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