

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

July 7, 2016

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Majority Leader
Room S-230, The Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Harry Reid
Minority Leader
Room S-321, The Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Paul D. Ryan
Speaker of the House of Representatives
H-232, The Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Minority Leader
H-204, The Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Leaders McConnell and Reid, Speaker Ryan, and Leader Pelosi:

We write regarding the creation of the Oversight Board established by the Puerto Rico Oversight, Management, and Economic Stability Act (PROMESA). As the board will hold unprecedented power over the fiscal management and general governance of the island, we ask that you honor the concept of self-governance and recommend to the President only qualified candidates from Puerto Rico. The Puerto Rican people deserve this most basic respect.

As you know, Section 101(e) of PROMESA creates an Oversight Board for Puerto Rico comprised of seven individuals from lists submitted by Congressional leadership and an appointment in the President's sole discretion. This board has wide powers over Puerto Rico, including the authority to write the island's Fiscal Plan, determine their annual budgets, veto their laws, override their regulations and executive orders, and make recommendations with the force of law. As the bill's own author noted, these powers are "far beyond that exercised by the Control Board established for the District of Columbia."

It is imperative that Puerto Ricans be given at least some voice on the Oversight Board. It will have the power to implement policies that would close schools; shutter hospitals; cut pensions; and lay off teachers, police, and firefighters. It has few boundaries on its powers, as the island is statutorily barred from exercising any oversight over the board and the board is immune from lawsuits resulting from actions taken under PROMESA. Considering these far-reaching authorities, the people of Puerto Rico should have considerable input in how this board will control the island.

We remain disappointed that the democratically elected representatives of Puerto Rico were not given any representation on the board, and we find it highly objectionable that neither they nor the people will be given an opportunity to weigh in on the establishment of the board. However, at a bare minimum, the board should be composed of members who maintain a primary

residence on the island and have a strong understanding of the structural causes of poverty in Puerto Rico and its socio-economic history. We ask that your recommendations to the President reflect this.

Thank you for your attention to this important issue.

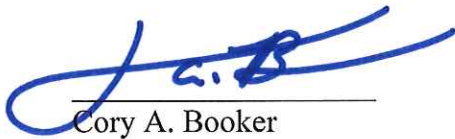
Sincerely,



Robert Menendez
United States Senator



Jeffrey A. Merkley
United States Senator



Cory A. Booker
United States Senator



Bernard Sanders
United States Senator