



AMERICAN COLLEGE OF GASTROENTEROLOGY

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January 25, 2018

The Honorable Paul Ryan
Speaker
United States House of Representatives
H-232, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Majority Leader
United States Senate
S-230, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Minority Leader
United States House of Representatives
H-204, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Chuck Schumer
Minority Leader
United States Senate
S-221, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Speaker Ryan and Leaders McConnell, Schumer and Pelosi,

On behalf of the American College of Gastroenterology (ACG), we again write to express our strong support for the people of Puerto Rico, for sufficient resources to facilitate their complete recovery from the devastation of Hurricanes Irma and Maria, and specifically, for adequate funding for the territory's Medicaid program. It is imperative that federal funding for Puerto Rico's Medicaid program allow the local government to meet the dire medical and public health needs during this ongoing humanitarian crisis and as the territory begins to rebuild.

As part of any disaster relief legislation, ACG asks the Congress to commit a sufficient level of funding now to ensure stability in the public safety net and medical provider community's ability to meet the basic needs of the territory's most affected residents. In particular, we support legislation to suspend the statutory cap on Puerto Rico's Medicaid program and to fund the program at a level of 6 billion over a two-year period, as well as granting assistance similar to other hurricane relief efforts, which may necessitate waivers. It is imperative that the American citizens in Puerto Rico receive the same access to treatment as their counterparts in the continental United States, and that their local government be afforded the same accommodations afforded to states following other major hurricanes.

ACG is a physician organization representing gastroenterologists and other gastrointestinal (GI) specialists. Founded in 1932, our organization currently includes over 14,500 members providing GI specialty care, including roughly 120 members in Puerto Rico. We focus on the issues confronting the GI specialist in delivering high quality patient care. The primary activities of the College have been, and continue to be, promoting evidence-based medicine and optimizing the quality of care our patients receive. Late last year, ACG hosted the World Congress of Gastroenterology in Orlando. Unfortunately, given the devastation to the transportation infrastructure on the island, as well as unmet medical needs back home, our members from Puerto Rico were unable to join us. In solidarity with our colleagues on the ground and in furtherance of our Hippocratic Oath to apply whatever measures are required to avoid inadequate medical treatment, we call on the Congress to fulfill its commitment to the people of Puerto Rico and the most vulnerable among them.

While we were encouraged by the initial progress in responding to these natural disasters in late 2017, we urge the Congress to finish the job by ensuring that disaster aid is promptly enacted, and includes adequate funding for Puerto Rico Medicaid. The challenges faced by Puerto Ricans are greater than the

capacity of our organization, or any advocacy organization for that matter, but we stand ready and willing to work hand-in-hand with policymakers and other advocates to ensure these demands become a reality.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Whitfield Knapple". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Whitfield Knapple, MD, FACP
Chair, Legislative and Public Policy Council
American College of Gastroenterology

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Wilmer Rodriguez MD". The signature is cursive and includes the letters "MD" at the end.

Wilmer Rodriguez, MD, FACP
ACG Governor for Puerto Rico