

Send your sign-on information to [alejandrom@boricuahumanrights.org](mailto:alejandrom@boricuahumanrights.org)

February 9, 2021

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi  
Speaker  
U.S. House of Representatives  
The Capitol  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Charles Schumer  
Majority Leader  
U.S. Senate  
The Capitol  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Speaker Pelosi and Senate Majority Leader Schumer,

The 117th Congress has a historic opportunity to put an end to 123 years of colonialism in Puerto Rico and jump-start a process of self-determination for its people. To this end, the group of X undersigned organizations urge you to support and prioritize the passage of the Puerto Rico Self-Determination Act.

Progressives across our Great State of New York and the country are closely following current debates about Puerto Rico. As you know, there are different opinions about how to resolve its colonial status. However, it is only Puerto Ricans who should have the authority and right to decide the future of Puerto Rico. To date, there has not been a fair, transparent, and federally binding process for Puerto Ricans to determine their political future. It is high time for that to change and that is why we urge you to support the right to a self-determination process that is fair and inclusive of all non-territorial options.

While some may argue that the matter of Puerto Ricans' opinion on political status was settled by the results of a referendum administered during the November 3, 2020 election, that is not the case for two reasons. Firstly, only 54.72% of registered voters participated in the referendum, rendering the small margin by which a yes to statehood won (52.52%) not decisive. Secondly, the referendum — a yes or no vote on statehood — was not binding, did not include a transition plan or an educational campaign on the consequences of the vote, and was not inclusive of other political status options. This is not a substitute for the deliberate process envisioned by the Self-Determination Act, through which democratically elected members of a status convention consult with a congressional commission on creating definitions and transition plans for different status options, with Puerto Ricans ultimately deciding their political fate through a final vote.

President Biden clearly stated the right course of action for Congress to take when he said: “I will engage Puerto Ricans — including representatives of every status option — in a process of self-determination, listening and developing federal legislation that outlines a fair path forward.”

As they have for decades, Puerto Ricans are clamoring for a legitimate, accountable, and inclusive process for decolonization and self-determination. For this, we need your leadership. We were enthused to learn from our colleagues in New York of Senate Majority Leader Schumer's expressions of support for H.R. 8113 - Puerto Rico Self-Determination Act of 2020, introduced by your New York colleagues Representatives Nydia Velazquez and Alexandria Ocasio Cortez. We expect the bill to be reintroduced in the House during the early part of the 117th Congress.

We, the undersigned, support this legislation for several reasons. First, it centers the people of Puerto Rico as the main protagonists of their own destiny. Second, it outlines a thoughtful yet pragmatic plan to develop a list of non-territorial options and transition plans. Third, it would facilitate a thoroughly democratic mechanism for the public selection of those options. Fourth, and most importantly, it has the growing support of members of the Puerto Rican diaspora in the U.S. and among a cross-section of Puerto Rican society.

This is the time to usher in a new relationship between the United States and the people of Puerto Rico. The colonization of Puerto Rico is a shameful part of this country's history. We have an opportunity to rectify this reality and we hope to work closely with you to this end.

We look forward to your response and leadership on this matter.

Sincerely,