PRESS RELEASE
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Foundation for Puerto Rico advocates for more participation in the disaster recovery funds
Foundation for Puerto Rico testified today before U.S. House Natural Resources Committee.

WASHINGTON (October 30, 2019) – Foundation for Puerto Rico (FPR) testified before Congress today to provide recommendations to help jump start the recovery in Puerto Rico.

Annie Mayol, President and COO of Foundation for Puerto Rico, appeared before the House Natural Resources Committee as one of two nonprofits invited to comment on amendments to the Puerto Rico Oversight, Management, and Stability Act, known as PROMESA, which was created in 2016 to manage Puerto Rico’s debt crisis.

Mayol’s testimony underscores the key role that non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and local communities can play in implementing disaster recovery programs funded by the federal government. FPR is asking the federal government to facilitate local NGO participation in the implementation of disaster recovery funds, stressing that permanent transformation is possible only when all sectors—the government, private industry, NGOs and the community—work together.

“Puerto Rico’s NGO sector can play a game-changing role in healing the distrust between the island and the federal government, while helping to keep the focus on recovery, prosperity and integrity,” said Mayol, noting that residents see NGOs as trusted partners that can operate free from partisan politics or narrow economic interests.

Foundation for Puerto Rico conveyed its concern about the proposal to create an Office of the Reconstruction Coordination for Puerto Rico, as adding more layers and bureaucratic processes for the use of disaster relief funds will further delay the disbursement of critical aid.

However, Puerto Rico could benefit from having a Point Person at the federal level, whose role would be to ensure the timely release of CDBG-DR and FEMA funds. “There is a major lack of federal coordination and vision in the use of these funds. Therefore, we recommend that the primary focus of this role should be to jumpstart our recovery,” indicated Mayol.

FPR also recommended that the House Natural Resources Committee looks for ways in which other federal disaster funds can become more accessible to the communities, suggesting a waiver of the private match requirement for federal funds like EDA, for a minimum period of three (3) years.

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About Foundation for Puerto Rico
Foundation for Puerto Rico is a 501(c)(3) local nonprofit organization. Since its creation in 2011, its mission has been to transform Puerto Rico and help it prosper through sustainable socio-economic development.
strategies. FPR was active in relief and recovery efforts immediately after Hurricane María, supporting other NGOs on the island and hosting over 180 organizations in its space, called El Colaboratorio. The foundation also served as a fiscal sponsor, raising more than $10 million for local NGOs helping farmers, artists and resiliency programs for local community centers.