

119TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

H. R. 596

To require a study relating to the consolidation of certain grant programs currently available to insular areas and the suitability of such consolidation for Puerto Rico, and for other purposes.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

JANUARY 21, 2025

Ms. VELÁZQUEZ (for herself, Mr. TORRES of New York, Ms. OCASIO-CORTEZ, Mrs. RAMIREZ, Mr. GOLDMAN of New York, Ms. MENG, Mr. ESPAILLAT, and Mr. HERNÁNDEZ) introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on Natural Resources

A BILL

To require a study relating to the consolidation of certain grant programs currently available to insular areas and the suitability of such consolidation for Puerto Rico, and for other purposes.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

3 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

4 This Act may be cited as the “Report on Grant Con-
5 solidation Authority for Puerto Rico Act”.

1 **SEC. 2. CONGRESSIONAL FINDINGS AND STATEMENT OF**
2 **PURPOSE.**

3 (a) INCREASED BURDEN ON THE PUBLIC SECTOR OF
4 PUERTO RICO.—The Congress makes the following find-
5 ings:

6 (1) Puerto Rico faces a severe economic crisis,
7 characterized by the largest municipal bankruptcy in
8 the United States history, higher levels of poverty
9 and socioeconomic inequality when compared to the
10 rest of the United States, and a reduced labor force.

11 (2) Puerto Rico is managing a large recovery
12 and reconstruction process prompted by hurricanes
13 Irma, María, and Fiona, the 2020 earthquakes, and
14 the COVID pandemic.

15 (3) The set of post-disaster conditions has ex-
16 erted a great burden on the public sector of the
17 Commonwealth of Puerto Rico. Public employees
18 have had to comply with new fiscal requirements im-
19 posed by the Financial Oversight and Management
20 Board under the Puerto Rico Oversight, Manage-
21 ment, and Economic Stability Act (“PROMESA”),
22 handle historic allocations of Federal funds, which
23 involves engaging with new agencies, programs, and
24 requirements over time, and balance fiscal con-
25 straints with the urgency to recruit specialized and

1 full-time workforce for the best use of disaster fund-
2 ing.

3 (b) STATEMENT OF PURPOSE.—It is the purpose of
4 this Act to study the suitability of grant consolidation to
5 minimize the burden upon the public sector of the Com-
6 monwealth of Puerto Rico and maximize its available re-
7 sources to access Federal funding.

8 **SEC. 3. STUDY REQUIRED.**

9 (a) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 1 year after the
10 date of the enactment of this Act, the Comptroller General
11 of the United States shall submit to the appropriate con-
12 gressional committees a report containing the results of
13 a study on the process by which grants made available
14 by the Federal Government are consolidated for insular
15 areas pursuant to part 97 of title 45, Code of Federal
16 Regulations. Such report shall also contain the following:

17 (1) An analysis, in consultation with appro-
18 priate officials of local agencies in Puerto Rico,
19 about the manner in which such agencies currently
20 access funding from programs that are listed in sec-
21 tion 97.12 of such part 97.

22 (2) A list of each grant or other program that
23 such officials would recommend adding to the list of
24 programs under such section 97.12.

1 (3) Any challenges noted by the Comptroller
2 General or by such officials relating to meeting the
3 existing requirements for obtaining funding for
4 Puerto Rico from such listed programs.

5 (4) An assessment by the Comptroller General
6 whether any of the challenges described pursuant to
7 paragraph (3) with respect to existing requirements
8 for obtaining funding would be partially or wholly
9 addressed by extending access to the consolidation of
10 such funding to Puerto Rico in the same manner
11 and to the same extent as the insular areas.

12 (5) Any recommendations of such officials re-
13 garding the manner in which that current process
14 for access to such funding should change, including
15 recommendations relating to extending access to the
16 consolidation of such funding to Puerto Rico.

17 (b) ACCESS TO PROMPT AND COMPLETE INFORMA-
18 TION.—Any official of Puerto Rico from whom the Comp-
19 troller General seeks information for purposes of the re-
20 port required by subsection (a) shall promptly and com-
21 prehensively respond to such request for information, and
22 in no case later than 90 days after the receipt of such
23 a request. To the extent appropriate, the Comptroller Gen-
24 eral may interpret a lack of response, or a partial or in-
25 complete response, to any such request for information ad-

1 versely in compiling the report required by such sub-
2 section.

3 (c) APPROPRIATE CONGRESSIONAL COMMITTEES DE-
4 FINED.—In this section, the term “appropriate congres-
5 sional committees” means—

6 (1) the Committee on Natural Resources, the
7 Committee on Education and Labor, and the Com-
8 mittee on Energy and Commerce of the House of
9 Representatives; and

10 (2) the Committee on Energy and Natural Re-
11 sources and the Committee on Health, Education,
12 Labor, and Pensions of the Senate.

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