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Congress takes step to transform Puerto Rico's energy system

\$1bn appropriation will deploy solar + storage to protect low-income households

Washington – Today Congress approved \$1 billion in federal funding to support the installation of rooftop solar and battery storage systems in low-income and vulnerable communities in Puerto Rico. Distributed solar and storage has proven to be a resilient and sustainable power source on the island. Congress included the funding as part of its emergency supplemental appropriations bill.

“Since 2018 organizations and community groups, including [Queremos Sol](#), have been advocating for the use of federal funds to deploy rooftop solar and storage systems on the island in order to enable a much-needed transformation from our vulnerable and fossil fuel dependent electric grid. This appropriation is a first step in recognizing the important role that rooftop solar and storage plays in ensuring a resilient and sustainable rebuilding of our electric sector. Targeting \$1 billion for

installation of these systems in low-income communities is also an important recognition that the benefits of rooftop solar need to reach those who need them the most," **said Ingrid Vila, President for [CAMBIO](#)**. She added, "We expect that a transparent and ample participation process will be put in place guaranteeing that local organizations and communities are involved in the planning, designing and implementation of the program."

"Solar is a solution," **said David Ortiz, Puerto Rico Program Director for [Solar United Neighbors \(SUN\)](#)**. "Rooftop solar and battery storage provided resilience to the power system during Hurricane Fiona. Virtually every household with these systems had power rapidly restored once the storms subsided. This funding needs to be deployed quickly to protect more families from the next storm and not unnecessarily stalled at an agency waiting to be distributed."

This allocation will provide rooftop solar and storage for 40,000 homes in the most impoverished and low-income communities on the island. These are the families and businesses that are always the last to have power restored after hurricanes and natural disasters.

"I am grateful that the White House and the Congress have made one billion dollars available to help vulnerable communities to go solar and to become resilient for future storms. The energy crisis and climate impacts have affected in a detrimental way the quality of life for the people of Puerto Rico. This aid will be a solution that will help the communities that most need it in the Puerto Rican archipelago," **said Roberto O. González Nieves, ofm., Archbishop of San Juan de Puerto Rico**.

"This is a triumph for the dozens of grassroots environmental organizations in Puerto Rico and the Diaspora that have pushed for rooftop solar and storage to increase resiliency and self-sufficiency among the most vulnerable population in our archipelago. We will now be working with the U.S. Department of Energy to make sure that the money goes where it is needed, that communities and NGOs have more decision-making power in this process, and that previous disaster funds that haven't been utilized are reprogrammed for rooftop solar & storage. After 124 years of colonialism, we deserve this and much more to increase our self-reliance and

energy independence," **said Edil Sepúlveda, Co-founder and President of the national advocacy organization, [Boricuas Unidos en la Diáspora \(BUDPR\)](#).**

The funds received support across [multiple sectors and groups](#) in Puerto Rico and the U.S, demonstrating the widespread interest in helping the vulnerable and energy-burdened communities. Support ranged from nonprofits, local businesses and faith-based organizations.

"I think the proposed allocation would start to address the life-threatening energy insecurity that residents of Puerto Rico face during events like Hurricane Fiona and generally," said Ruth Santiago. It's important to note that in order to tackle the constant power outages, the historic amount of FEMA disaster recovery funds (\$9.6B) and mitigation funds (\$4B) previously allocated for the Puerto Rico electric system that has not been spent should be used to provide rooftop solar to residents, small businesses and institutions in Puerto Rico rather than rebuild the vulnerable centralized wires, poles, towers and substations as proposed by the Government of Puerto Rico and LUMA Energy." **said Ruth Santiago, Environmental and Community Lawyer**

"Any help that could be given to us small businesses, which are experiencing an energy crisis, will be helpful. Having an energy source such as solar energy, will prevent our operations from being interrupted after the passing of a hurricane," **said Manuel Rodriguez, Dueno de [Manny's Pizza](#), Trujillo Alto**

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[Solar United Neighbors \(SUN\)](#) is a nonprofit organization based in Washington, D.C. that works across the U.S. and in Puerto Rico to represent the needs and interests of solar owners and supporters. Since 2007, SUN has been helping people go solar, join together, and fight for their energy rights. SUN holds events and education programs to help people become informed solar consumers, maximize the value of their solar investment, and advocate for fair solar policies.

[CAMBIO](#), a non-profit organization based in San Juan, Puerto Rico, that develops and promotes sustainable and responsible actions for the island. CAMBIO concentrates its effort in research, design, education and implementation of effective and transparent policies and strategies. Since 2018, CAMBIO has been the lead convener of Queremos Sol, a multi-sectoral coalition of community, environmental and labor organizations advocating for the transformation of Puerto Rico's electrical system to 100% distributed renewable energy under a public, democratic governance model.