

For more information contact:
Cristina Pacione-Zayas or Jessie Fuentes
Puerto Rican Agenda Co-chairs
Phone: 773-418-5528 or 773-603-0236
Email: pragendachgo@gmail.com



CHICAGO, IL (September 22, 2017)—The Puerto Rican Agenda would like extend its appreciation of the support shown by elected officials, community leaders, and the press over the past days as it affirms the collective effort to move forward in helping our family, friends, and fellow citizens in Puerto Rico. While the devastation is still undergoing assessment and there has been little communication from the island, President Donald Trump officially declared Puerto Rico a Disaster Area as the Category 5 Hurricane —the first of its kind in nearly 100 years—made landfall on Wednesday and continues to wreak havoc with predicted downpour through Sunday. 55 of 78 municipalities are official total disaster areas and power is expected to be out four to six months.

Chicago's Puerto Rican community is working diligently to assist with rescue, relief, and rebuilding by fundraising for essential needs that will go to reputable local organizations in the hardest hit municipalities of Puerto Rico. Within the first 24 hours of issuing the call to action for collecting relief funds, \$30,000 has been secured by generous partners. \$26,000 alone came from the National Museum of Puerto Rican Arts and Culture as a result of directing 100% of the proceeds from the live auction during the 4th Annual Raices Gala on Thursday, September 21, 2017. This work will be complemented by the exploration of organizing the deployment of first responder brigades including medical personnel.

All members working within the Puerto Rican Agenda are volunteers and receive no monetary gains for their efforts. As we continue to fundraise for those affected by Hurricane Maria, we wanted to restate the fundraising strategy determined after Hurricane Irma. Puerto Rican Agenda members identified three action items for directing immediate relief to the island:

1. Secure accurate data on damage as a result of Hurricane Maria
2. Contact Mayors' Association of Puerto Rico to learn about viable and appropriate avenues to support
3. Articulate clear criteria about selection of relief recipient(s)

With respect to the selection criteria, members agreed upon the following benchmarks for determining the entity(ies) that would receive funds collected through the Puerto Rican Agenda:

1. Direct to hardest hit areas
2. Demonstrate an existing relationship with reputable community organizations and/or municipal government
3. Support rebuilding efforts with a focus on the local economy
4. Funds must be directed to residents

Members will conduct a short period of investigation to pursue the first two action items while launching the fundraising campaign starting with a benefit featuring local talent on Friday, September 22, 2017 at the Segundo Ruiz Belvis Cultural Center (4048 W. Armitage) from 7:00-11:00 PM through next Friday, September 29, 2017. At the conclusion of the fundraising campaign an accounting report of all funds collected will be shared with the public as well as an announcement of recipients based on the articulated criteria. All donations will go to a Puerto Rican Agenda Hurricane Emergency Relief Fund through PayPal: PRHurricaneRelief@boricuahumanrights.org

The Puerto Rican Agenda is an organic body of activist volunteers seeking to bring awareness of the issues that most affect Puerto Ricans locally, on the island, and in the diaspora. The Puerto Rican Agenda meets publicly and invites any member of the community and allies to attend and participate in monthly meetings the first Saturday of the month at 1402 N. Kedzie from 9:00 AM – 11:00 AM.

The Puerto Rican Agenda is an unincorporated organization of local Puerto Rican leaders that influences policy for the advancement of the Puerto Rican community in Chicago. Over the past two decades, the Agenda continues to develop and execute a community-driven vision for the Humboldt Park Area, where most Puerto Ricans in Chicago live, and Paseo Boricua, a business and entertainment district on Division Street between California and Western.