

June 13th, 2024

The Honorable Jennifer Granholm
Secretary
U.S. Department of Energy
1000 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20585

Dear Secretary Granholm:

Thank you for your continued efforts to advance energy justice, resilience and reliability for all Puerto Ricans. Through the completion of the “*Puerto Rico Grid Resilience and Transitions to 100% Renewable Energy Study*” and the launch of the Puerto Rico Energy Resilience Fund (PR-ERF), your agency has made significant progress in helping the island meet 100% of its electricity needs with renewable energy. However, the current instability of the electrical service requires additional actions at the federal level to cover the immediate needs of the residents of Puerto Rico.

In recent weeks, Puerto Ricans have endured multiple and prolonged interruptions to their electrical service. For instance, communities in Guayanilla and Salinas have been without electricity for more than seven days, while towns like Coamo, Aibonito and Santa Isabel have suffered twelve days without power. These residents are just a portion of the tens of thousands in the island’s central and southern regions struggling with outages.¹ Meanwhile, on June 5th, several small businesses in San Juan reported being without electricity for nine consecutive days. Although precise information on the economic losses for these businesses is not readily available, their owners have expressed concerns about their ability to continue operating with generators. For those businesses that lack a generator or the means to purchase diesel, the situation is even more dire, often forcing them to close.² Just yesterday, a massive blackout left over 340,000 consumers without service in the San Juan metropolitan area.³ As a result of these disruptions, residents have been forced to discard damaged food, medicines, and household appliances. Additionally, some have been unable to access their medications due to difficulties in contacting their doctors and

¹ <https://abcnews.go.com/Business/wireStory/extended-power-outage-hit-puerto-rico-angers-worries-110993955>
<https://www.elnuevodia.com/noticias/locales/notas/no-estamos-pidiendo-nada-que-sea-extraordinario-marchan-en-santa-isabel-por-la-inestabilidad-del-servicio-electrico/>

² <https://www.elnuevodia.com/negocios/empresas-comercios/notas/comerciantes-de-la-avenida-ponce-de-leon-llevan-sin-luz-hace-mas-de-una-semana/>

³ <https://www.elnuevodia.com/noticias/locales/notas/apagon-deja-sin-servicio-de-energia-electrica-a-sobre-150000-clientes-en-las-regiones-de-bayamon-san-juan-carolina-y-caguas/>

pharmacies.⁴ These events have coincided with excessive heat waves hitting the island, with temperatures rising to 112 degrees Fahrenheit, further hurting working-class families and at-risk populations.⁵

It is abundantly clear that the lack of a reliable electrical service creates and exacerbates vulnerabilities across different sectors of the population. While the private operators fail to deliver results, the physical, emotional, and economic toll on consumers grows. At a minimum, each consumer should be properly compensated for the economic losses they have experienced due to the blackouts. Moreover, there must be increased transparency around the extent of the damage caused by the service interruptions under the private operators.

To help achieve these goals, I urge the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) to extend the capabilities of DOE's Interruption Cost Estimate (ICE) Calculator to include Puerto Rico. This statistical tool would provide the local authorities responsible for overseeing the private operators and the public with detailed information on: (1) the duration and frequency of the outages and, most importantly, (2) the economic impact of each power outage on the various customer segments (residential, commercial and industrial).

Therefore, I respectfully request responses to each of the following:

- 1) What potential funding sources are available to support the adaptation of the ICE Calculator for Puerto Rico?
- 2) How can the DOE ensure local private utilities share the most up to date data on power outages and customer impacts in Puerto Rico?
- 3) What are the current limitations of the ICE Calculator regarding its application to Puerto Rico, and how can these be addressed?
- 4) What pilot programs can be implemented in Puerto Rico to test the adapted or new modules of the ICE Calculator?
- 5) What strategies can the DOE employ to engage with local stakeholders, including government officials, utility companies, and community leaders, to ensure their input and collaboration?

⁴ <https://www.metro.pr/noticias/2024/06/11/tuve-que-botar-toda-la-comida-reina-la-preocupacion-y-el-enojo-por-apagones-en-la-isla/>

⁵ <https://www.primerahora.com/noticias/puerto-rico/notas/ola-de-calor-excesivo-arropa-a-puerto-rico-por-sexto-dia-consecutivo/>

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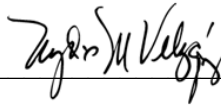
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There is a clear opportunity for the DOE to deepen its commitment to achieving energy justice and reliability on the island. Lives are at stake, and residents are urgently waiting for the federal support to recover from this energy crisis. Puerto Ricans have suffered significant government neglect over the past few years. It is time to reverse this pattern and take decisive action to hold those responsible for providing quality electrical service accountable. I look forward to your response and thank you for your attention to this critical matter.

Sincerely,



Nydia M. Velázquez
Member of Congress