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The Puerto Rico Advisory Committee to the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights Publishes Memorandum on Access to Federal Benefits & the Role of Race in the Relationship with the Federal Government as Part of its Study on the Insular Cases and the Civil Rights of Residents of Puerto Rico

The Puerto Rico Advisory Committee (Advisory Committee) to the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights (the Commission) announces the publication of its [fourth and final memorandum](#) as part of its study on the effects of the Insular Cases and the Non-Incorporation Doctrine on the civil rights of the residents of Puerto Rico. This memorandum focuses on two key issues: the lack of parity in the allocation of federal benefits, and the role that race and ethnicity has played over time in the relationship between the island and the federal government. The Committee highlights several findings and recommendations identified in the testimony it has received from experts on these subjects.

For the focus on federal benefits, the memorandum specifically analyzes Medicaid, Supplemental Security Income, Veterans' benefits, and nutrition assistance, which are programs under the expertise of panelists who testified before the Committee. The Committee learned about program structures and how their appropriations and service delivery differ between Puerto Rico and the states. Based on this information, the Committee found that there is an urgency in the lack of program equity and the impact this has on vulnerable residents.

In learning about the categorizations of race and ethnicity over time in Puerto Rico, the Committee found that racial formation in Puerto Rico has been complex and has faced challenges in accuracy through data collection. In addition to Puerto Rico being excluded from various critical statistical population surveys, the cultural understanding of race, ethnicity, and identity differs from the standardization applied through survey tools developed by the federal government and are not fully captured in official data.

The Committee Chair, Andrés Córdova Phelps, said: "We thank the panelists for shedding light on these topics which directly impact the lives of every Puerto Rican. We aim to use our platform to highlight the information they shared as a way to encourage equal treatment and inclusivity of the residents of Puerto Rico."

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The U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, established by the Civil Rights Act of 1957, is the only independent, bipartisan agency charged with advising the President and Congress on civil rights and reporting annually on federal civil rights enforcement. Our 56 Advisory Committees offer a broad perspective on civil rights concerns at the state and local level. For information about the Commission, please visit us at www.usccr.gov and follow us on Facebook and LinkedIn.