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THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF PENNSYLVANIA

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HOUSE RESOLUTION

No. 207 Session of  
2022

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INTRODUCED BY CRUZ, SCHLOSSBERG, SANCHEZ, HILL-EVANS, FREEMAN  
AND KRAJEWSKI, MAY 24, 2022

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REFERRED TO COMMITTEE ON AGING AND OLDER ADULT SERVICES,  
MAY 24, 2022

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A RESOLUTION

1 Urging the Congress of the United States to pass legislation  
2 that would extend the Supplemental Security Income program to  
3 residents of all United States territories.

4 WHEREAS, Since Supplemental Security Income program (SSI)  
5 payments began in 1974, the program has "guaranteed a minimum  
6 level of income" for resource-limited, low-income seniors and  
7 low-income individuals with disabilities; and

8 WHEREAS, Residents of Puerto Rico, Guam, the United States  
9 Virgin Islands and American Samoa are ineligible to receive SSI  
10 despite higher poverty rates and lower assistance program  
11 benefit levels than those of the mainland United States; and

12 WHEREAS, At almost 44%, 23%, 22% and 58%, the respective  
13 poverty rates of Puerto Rico, Guam, the United States Virgin  
14 Islands and American Samoa far surpass that of the mainland  
15 United States' rate which is 11.4%; and

16 WHEREAS, Additionally, the eligibility criteria and benefit  
17 amounts of means-tested adult assistance programs available in  
18 most of these territories are more restrictive than SSI; and

1       WHEREAS, If the bar against SSI eligibility were to be  
2 eliminated, more than 350,000 people living in Puerto Rico, and  
3 many more in other United States territories, would be granted a  
4 pathway out of poverty by receiving a higher amount of benefits  
5 than currently available to them; and

6       WHEREAS, Across all branches of the United States government,  
7 there is support for overturning the discriminatory policy of  
8 SSI ineligibility in United States territories; and

9       WHEREAS, President Joseph R. Biden has called on Congress to  
10 amend the Social Security Act to extend these benefits to  
11 residents of Puerto Rico, stating "there can be no second-class  
12 citizens in the United States of America"; and

13       WHEREAS, The United States House of Representatives passed  
14 the Build Back Better Act to restore fairness to this economic  
15 security program by giving the residents of Puerto Rico, Guam,  
16 the United States Virgin Islands and American Samoa access to  
17 SSI for the first time in 50 years, however the bill is now  
18 stalled in the United States Senate; and

19       WHEREAS, H.R. 537, a bill in Congress that would extend SSI  
20 to the residents of Puerto Rico, the United States Virgin  
21 Islands, Guam and American Samoa has stalled in the United  
22 States House Committee on Ways and Means since January 2021; and

23       WHEREAS, On April 21, 2022, the United States Supreme Court  
24 decided *United States v. Vaello Madero*, No. 20-303, holding that  
25 the Fifth Amendment's Due Process Clause does not require  
26 Congress to make SSI benefits available to residents of Puerto  
27 Rico to the same extent that it makes those benefits available  
28 to residents of the mainland United States; and

29       WHEREAS, On its face, the prevailing belief of the Justices  
30 in *United States v. Vaello Madero* is that the solution should

1 come from Congress; and

2 WHEREAS, Serving as the voice of the people, the Congress of  
3 the United States has a duty to the more than 3.5 million  
4 citizens residing in United States territories to pass  
5 legislation that will give them access to a safety net available  
6 to all other United States citizens; therefore be it

7 RESOLVED, That the House of Representatives of the  
8 Commonwealth of Pennsylvania urge the Congress of the United  
9 States to pass legislation that would extend the Supplemental  
10 Security Income program to residents of all United States  
11 territories; and be it further

12 RESOLVED, That copies of this resolution be transmitted to  
13 the following:

14 (1) The President of the United States.

15 (2) The President pro tempore of the United States  
16 Senate.

17 (3) The Speaker of the United States House of  
18 Representatives.

19 (4) The chair of the Committee on Finance of the United  
20 States Senate.

21 (5) The chair of the Committee on Ways and Means of the  
22 United States House of Representatives.

23 (6) Each member of Congress from Pennsylvania.