



Office of the City Clerk

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Legislation Text

File #: R2021-256, **Version:** 1

Committee on Health and Human Relations

Resolution

WHEREAS, Chicago is home to over 150,000 Puerto Rican residents deeply concerned with and connected to Puerto Rico, as demonstrated by the fact that Chicago's Puerto Rican community was the first to send nongovernmental aid to the island after Hurricane Maria in 2017; and

WHEREAS, this diasporic community has long voiced support for Puerto Rico's decolonization and self-determination, today it once again reaffirms this right, in recognition of international law and human rights; and

WHEREAS, Puerto Rico enters the one-hundred and twenty-third year of U.S. colonization, which began with the U.S. invasion in 1898 and the subsequent and illegal annexation of Puerto Rico through The Treaty of Paris between the U.S. and Spain that year; and

WHEREAS, the U.S. Supreme Court declared, in the wake of the Plessy vs. Ferguson decision, that Puerto Rico belongs to but is not part of the United States, citing Puerto Ricans' supposed racial inferiority and unfitness for self-rule, and that would subsequently govern Puerto Rico through a doctrine of separate and unequal; and

WHEREAS, the U.S. government and corporations have benefited immensely from Puerto Rico's resources, labor, and environment at the cost of Puerto Rican well-being and freedom, and as a result fueled mass migration from the island, to such an extent that today the majority of Puerto Ricans live outside of Puerto Rico; and

WHEREAS, while Puerto Rico was granted local autonomy through the establishment of the Commonwealth constitution in 1952, this did not alter the colonial relationship between the U.S. and Puerto Rico, as the U.S. Congress retained plenary power over Puerto Rico; and

WHEREAS, U.S. authorities have long repressed pro-independence movements and efforts to self-determination, it has allowed non-binding plebiscites and referendums that have unresolved the status issue; and

WHEREAS, the Puerto Rican New Progressive Party, which advocates for Puerto Rico to become the 51st state of the union, has imposed the two most recent referenda, in 2017 and 2020, these have been marred by partisan control, voting irregularities, and confusing ballot language; and

WHEREAS, statehood proponents, such as the current governor of Puerto Rico Pedro Pierluisi, who himself did not win a majority of the vote, argue that the November 3, 2020 referendum produced a mandate for statehood, there are significant reasons to question this conclusion, including the fact that the referendum suffered from historic lows in participation, excluded non-statehood options, offered voters no transition plan on the consequences of the vote, and was widely opposed by much of Puerto Rico's civil society; and

WHEREAS, there is no mandate for statehood, there is consensus in Puerto Rican and its throughout its diaspora that resolving Puerto Rico's colonial status requires a fair, inclusive, transparent, democratic, and binding self-determination process; and

WHEREAS, this type of process is outlined in the Puerto Rico Self-Determination Act, soon to be reintroduced by Puerto Rican Congresswomen Nydia Velazquez and Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez; and

WHEREAS, the Puerto Rico Self-Determination Act affirms that Puerto Ricans have the final determination on the destiny of Puerto Rico and proposes the formation of a constitutional convention made up of elected delegates that represent all of the major political status positions, including statehood, free association, and independence; and

WHEREAS, the Act further recommends that the Puerto Rican people must be provided with extensive information and engagement on all non-territorial options available and what their real implications would be, and that the process be led and decided by the people who are impacted, not by political parties or under the pressures of political agendas; and

WHEREAS, the act most closely corresponds with President Biden pledge to "engage Puerto Ricans - including representatives of every status option - in a process of self-determination, listening and developing federal legislation that outlines a fair path forward"; and

WHEREAS, the Puerto Rican Chicago community today joins with Puerto Ricans across the diaspora and Puerto Rico to support Congresswomen Nydia Velazquez and Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez's Puerto Rico Self-Determination Act, and calls for an end the shameful colonization of Puerto Rico.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Chicago City Council calls upon Illinois legislators-at all levels of government, to endorse the Puerto Rico Self-Determination Act; and

Alderman Roberto Maldonado - 26th Ward

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the U.S. Congress respond to will of Puerto Rico and to usher in a new relationship between the United States and the people of Puerto Rico.

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