



HEALTH CARE IN PUERTO RICO AND THE U.S. VIRGIN ISLANDS: A SIX-MONTH CHECK-UP AFTER THE STORMS

March 19, 2018

9:30 a.m. – 11:00 a.m. ET

The Barbara Jordan Conference Center
1330 G Street, NW, Washington, DC 20005

Panelist Biographies

Samantha Artiga, Director of the Disparities Policy Project at the Kaiser Family Foundation and Associate Director for the Foundation's Program on Medicaid and the Uninsured. Ms. Artiga leads research and policy analysis to provide greater insight into healthcare disparities affecting underserved groups and strategies to promote equity in health care. In addition, she serves as a national expert on Medicaid and CHIP and directs work on eligibility policy at the federal and state level and outreach and enrollment as well as on and coverage and access for vulnerable populations, including homeless individuals and immigrants.

Joshua Barnes, Acting Director of the Recovery Division in the Department of Health and Human Services, Assistant Secretary for Preparedness and Response. In that capacity he leads the policy development, preparedness, and post-disaster implementation of the Health and Social Services Recovery Support Function.

Previously, he served on the White House National Security Council Staff as the Director for Preparedness Policy. He led, planned, and coordinated development and implementation of preparedness policies and grant programs. Included in those efforts was the implementation of the National Preparedness Goal and the National Preparedness System which encompasses the protection, prevention, mitigation, response, and recovery mission areas. In addition, he led interagency efforts to better integrate federal community resilience policies and metrics. Also, he led the Administration's actions in building long-term drought resilience resulting in a Presidential Memorandum and associated Action Plan.

Prior to joining the White House, Mr. Barnes served as the EDA Disaster Recovery Coordinator and led disaster recovery policy and technical assistance implementation efforts. In his tenure at EDA, he served as a core team member in the National Incident Command Economic Solutions Team responding to the economic recovery consequences from the Deepwater Horizon Oil Spill. In addition, Mr. Barnes served as the National Coordinator for the Economic Recovery Support Function, under the National Disaster Recovery Framework. In that role Mr. Barnes led interagency efforts to coordinate information sharing, technical assistance, and the leverage of resources to support major and catastrophic disasters nationwide. Mr. Barnes also led economic resilience policy initiatives for the agency.

Congresswoman Jenniffer González-Colón, was elected November 8th, 2016 as Puerto Rico's sole Representative to the U.S. Congress, also known as the Resident Commissioner. In so doing, she became the first woman ever to hold the office. Ms. Gonzalez-Colón received the most votes (over 718,000) out of any elected official on the Island in the past election.

A lifelong Republican and activist for Puerto Rican statehood, Ms. González-Colón entered public office in a 2002 special election, becoming the youngest member at the time of the Puerto Rico House of Representatives. She then quickly rose through the ranks achieving the post of Speaker of the House for four years and Minority Leader for another four.

Her priorities as Puerto Rico's sole voice in Congress include spearheading the economic recovery of Puerto Rico, securing the equal treatment for Puerto Rico's three and a half million U.S. Citizens in federal laws, regulations, services, and funding, and ensuring that Congress responds decisively to the overwhelming electoral mandate of Puerto Rico's voters for admission as the 51st state of the Union in both plebiscites by 61.3% in November 2012 and 97% in June 2017.

She has quickly made her presence felt on Capitol Hill, having been elected by her colleagues to the influential Republican Conference House Policy Committee and selected to the Speaker's Intergovernmental Affairs Task Force. González-Colón is a member of the House Committees on Veterans' Affairs, Small Business, and Natural Resources, where she is Vice-Chair of the Subcommittee on Indian, Insular, and Alaska Native Affairs. She chairs the Puerto Rico Economic Growth Caucus and co-chairs the Congressional Friends of Spain Caucus.

González-Colón has sponsored and cosponsored legislation to improve services to veterans, provide equal treatment to citizens in the U.S. Territories, protect access to education, strengthen Homeland Security and promote Small Business. She has been recognized by NewsMax as one of the 100 most influential Republican women and by The Hill as one of the new members to watch, and received the National Trailblazer Award from the League of United Latin American Citizens and APEX Award for Mental Health advocacy from the American Psychiatric Association.

A product of the Puerto Rico public school system, holder of a Juris Doctor and Master of Laws degree (LL.M.), González-Colón serves as Chair of the Puerto Rico Republican Party, and First Vice Chair of the local New Progressive Party, the standard bearer for Puerto Rico statehood. She has received recognition for her career as an elected official by the Puerto Rico United Retailers Center, the Spanish Chamber of Commerce, and Manufacturer's Association, and was selected as an Elected Woman of Excellence by the National Foundation for Women Legislators, among other awards and memberships.

Ms. Ivonne I. Rivera Hernández, Esq., an attorney-at-law in the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico and the CEO/Executive Director of HealthproMed- Puerto Rico since June 2017 and a proud mother of two daughters, Nicole, an Interior Designer professional and Gabriela, a freshman college student of the Conservatory of Performing Arts at Point Park University, Pittsburgh.

Education: Her Professional education entails a Bachelor's Degree in Justice Systems; a Master's in Human Rights and Anti-Discriminatory Practices from Sacred Heart University of Puerto Rico. She also holds a Juris Doctor from the Interamerican University Law School in Puerto Rico.

Professional and expertise: Ms. Rivera has a vast experience in the legal environment where she has been embedded for eighteen years. Her expertise stems out from her work for government agencies and private industry. She had dedicated 16 years in the federal compliance framework for the health

industry with special attention to electronic health information, data analytics, privacy and the security, health information exchange, e-discovery processes, and tech contracting. On 2009 she established the first law firm in PR dedicated and specialized in e- Health and Transactional Law, tech contracts and electronics application licensing.

Experiences and accomplishments: on 2010 served as legal advisor for the Puerto Rico Department of Health for the Puerto Rico Health Information Network project. On 2012 was appointed as State Health Information Technology Coordinator for the Puerto Rico jurisdiction. On 2014 led the internal investigation for the biggest PHI breach case reported in PR, concerning health electronic information mismanagement by a cover entity which finalized with the imposition of 3.5 million dollars fine, and a corrective action plan by the Office for Civil Rights.

At present time: On June 2017 assumed the position of Executive Director for HealthproMed (HPM Foundation, Inc.). HPM is a Federally Qualified Health Center that supports the communities of Barrio Obrero, San Juan and three satellites clinics: Carolina, and the islands of Culebra and Vieques.

Barbara Lyons, Senior Vice President at the Kaiser Family Foundation, is a leading expert on Medicaid and health policy issues affecting low-income and vulnerable populations. She conducts policy research, testifies and has published widely on health insurance coverage, access to care, health care delivery and financing, dual eligibles and long-term care. She is Director of the Program on Medicaid and the Uninsured, a major initiative of the Foundation that serves as a policy institute and forum for analyzing health care coverage and access for the low-income population and assessing options for reform.

Prior to her position with KFF, Dr. Lyons served on the policy staff of The Commonwealth Fund Commission on Elderly People Living Alone where she specialized in economic, health coverage and financing issues facing elderly people. Dr. Lyons received her doctoral degree in health policy from the Johns Hopkins University, Bloomberg School of Public Health.

Dr. Rafael Rodríguez-Mercado, Secretary of the Department of Health of Puerto Rico, charge in which he has the mission to design and implement the public health policy as encompassed in the government platform of the current administration. He brings a wealth of experience to the Department as a Colonel in the United States Army, serving in the Medical Reserve, as a neurosurgeon supporting Walter Reed Medical Hospital and Brook Army Medical Center and as an Associated Professor of Surgery, Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences. Dr. Rodríguez Mercado serves as Director for a renowned Endovascular Surgery Program and was Chancellor of the Medical Sciences Campus of the University of Puerto Rico. He has applied this experience to the current's administration's public health policy centered of three strategic pillars: A patient-centered health system, fair and accessible health services and an emphasis on primary care and prevention.

He obtained a Bachelor of Science degree in Chemistry and a Doctor of Medicine from the University of Puerto Rico. As a student, he received the research and student awards, as well as the recognition of the House of Representatives in 1988. He completed his specialty in Neurosurgery after seven years of traineeship at the University of Puerto Rico, School of Medicine. Then, he obtained a subspecialty in endovascular neurosurgery from the State University of New York at Buffalo, NY.

Dr. Rafael Rodríguez Mercado was born in Ponce, Puerto Rico. He is married with Wanda Santiago-Pimentel, a Medical Technologist, and is the proud father of a young university student, Rafael Alejandro.

Congresswoman Stacey E. Plaskett, represents the United States Virgin Islands' at-large Congressional District in the United States House of Representatives. Stacey currently serves on the [House Committee on Agriculture](#) and the [House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform](#). She is also a member of the Congressional Black Caucus, the New Democrat Coalition, and the Congressional Caribbean Caucus.

As a member of the Committee on Agriculture, Stacey works to ensure the Virgin Islands and other rural communities receive adequate funding for necessary programs aimed at rural development and programs that provide needed supplemental assistance to hardworking families.

As a member of the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, Stacey employs her skills as a former prosecutor to ensure accountability and transparency both within government and private sector entities whose operations impact the Virgin Islands community and communities across America.

Plaskett is a staunch advocate for poverty reduction and equal voting rights and is well versed in Caribbean economic development and public-private partnerships for growing the economies of developing areas. She is a graduate of Choate Rosemary Hall, earned her undergraduate degree from Georgetown University, and her Juris Doctorate from American University's Washington College of Law.

Diane Rowland, Sc.D., Executive Vice President at the Kaiser Family Foundation, is a nationally recognized health policy expert with a distinguished career in public policy and research focusing on health insurance coverage, access to care, and health financing for low-income, elderly, and disabled populations. From 1991-2016, she served as Executive Director of the Kaiser Commission on Medicaid and the Uninsured, now the Kaiser Program on Medicaid and the Uninsured. Dr. Rowland oversees the Foundation's health policy analytic work on Medicaid, Medicare, private health insurance, HIV and global health policy, women's Health Policy, and disparities. A noted authority on Medicare, Medicaid, and health policy, she testifies frequently and has published widely on these issues. From 2009-2015, Dr. Rowland served as the inaugural Chair of the congressionally-authorized Medicaid and CHIP Payment and Access Commission (MACPAC) established to advise Congress on issues related to Medicaid and the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP). Dr. Rowland is an elected member of the National Academy of Medicine and holds a Doctor of Science degree (Sc.D.) from the Bloomberg School of Public Health at the Johns Hopkins University.

Bernard A. Wheatley, DBA, FACHE, CEO of [Schneider Regional Medical Center \(St. Thomas, U.S. Virgin Islands\)](#). Since April 2013, Dr. Wheatley has been CEO of the umbrella entity for three facilities: Roy Lester Schneider Hospital in St. Thomas; Myrah Keating Smith Community Health Center in St. John; and Charlotte Kimelman Cancer Institute in St. Thomas. With more than two decades of healthcare management experience, Dr. Wheatley has held positions at academic and community medical centers over the course of his career. He earned his Bachelor of Health Administration from St. Josephs College in New York, Master of Business Administration from New York Institute of Technology in New York and Doctor of Business Administration degree from North Central University in Prescott Valley, Arizona. Dr. Wheatley also earned Executive Certificate in Health Care Management from The Ohio State University and Certificate in Health Care Policy from Harvard University. He is a **Fellow** of the American College of Healthcare Executives and a recipient of their Service Award. He is married to Loretta and have 3 children.