

Resident Commissioner Pablo José Hernández (PR-00)
Fiscal Year 2027 National Defense Authorization Act Priorities
April 15, 2026

Thank you to the Members of the House Armed Services Committee. I'm here to fight for Veterans in Puerto Rico and their families. As you advance this year's National Defense Authorization Act, I urge you to extend equal treatment in Tricare to all the veterans in the Commonwealth.

My bill, the TRICARE Equality Act (H.R.2632) would benefit nearly 38,000 TRICARE beneficiaries in Puerto Rico. This includes active-duty service members and their families. This includes members of the National Guard and Reserve. And this includes around 24,000 military retirees and their families.

What's the issue? Right now, Puerto Rico is considered as an "overseas location." This creates unnecessary and significant barriers to accessing care. Basically, we don't have the same level of access or reliability of Tricare Prime on the mainland. Veterans are paying out of pocket. Veterans are traveling off the island for basic specialty care. Veterans are waiting longer for treatment. My legislation closes this gap.

When the US Government spends \$2 billion a day in an overseas war but refuses to spend a fraction of that per year to help our veterans in Puerto Rico, the US Government is failing as a matter of principle. It's incredible: our soldiers are just as valuable as their fellow citizens in the mainland when it is time to fight, but not nearly as valuable when the fight ends.

I discussed this issue with Ranking Member Smith in December, and hope we improve TRICARE access for Puerto Rico's veterans. Our veterans have served this nation with honor. They deserve equal access to the care they have earned. Thank you.