

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

June 16, 2025

The Honorable Lori Chavez-DeRemer
Secretary
Department of Labor
200 Constitution Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20210

Dear Secretary Chavez-DeRemer:

We are writing to urge you to reverse your decision to phase out operations of contract-operated Job Corps centers nationwide by the end of June 2025,¹ which is already impacting critical services at the Puerto Rico campuses.

Evidence shared by my constituents shows that these centers are uniquely positioned to connect low-income and disadvantaged youth with educational and job opportunities that help them achieve long-term success. We urge you to carefully consider this information and refrain from disrupting the vital work these centers perform every day to secure a better future for thousands of young people.

The Job Corps program in Puerto Rico currently serves nearly 700 young individuals through its centers in Arecibo (Garrochales) and Aguadilla (Ramey).^{2,3} Both offer a wide array of industry-recognized certifications, including healthcare, construction, technology and culinary arts. These certifications enhance students' skillsets and employability, as the companies providing the training often hire the trainees. Additionally, participants get involved in volunteerism projects that align with their vocational skills and strengthen their community ties. Beyond technical training, Job Corps supports academic development, helping participants earn a high school diploma or an equivalent degree. On a personal level, students receive coaching where mentors identify and help address personal issues impacting career readiness. Without cost, students can get housing, food, health and dental care, a basic living allowance, and basic uniforms and equipment.⁴

¹ Rebecca Rainey & Sam Skolnik, *Federal Judge Puts Freeze on DOL Termination of Job Corps*, BLOOMBERG, June 5, 2025, <https://news.bloomberglaw.com/litigation/dol-temporarily-blocked-from-ending-job-corps-program-by-judge>

² Oscar J. Serrano, "*Pausa*" de fondos federales para educación vocacional, NOTICEL, Jun. 3, 2025, <https://www.noticel.com/economia/educacion/ahora/top-stories/20250603/pausa-de-fondos-federales-para-educacion-vocacional/>

³ However, this number has been decreasing since March 20, 2025, when an administrative change started preventing these centers from conducting background checks, which are needed for student enrollment.

⁴ Letter from the Puerto Rico Job Corps Centers to Congresswoman Nydia M. Velázquez (June 9, 2025).

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

Based on national performance metrics, Puerto Rico's two Job Corps programs have achieved outstanding results. From July 2024 to April 2025, the Arecibo and Aguadilla centers ranked first and second in the country, respectively. These rankings reflect key indicators such as completion rates of Career Technical Training (CTT) and program retention over 90 days.⁵

Terminating support for the Puerto Rico Job Corps program beyond the June 30, 2025 deadline would jeopardize the well-being of hundreds of student participants, leaving at least 287 without housing⁶ and the critical resources for success. It would also result in the loss of an estimated 240 jobs and disrupt vital partnerships with local suppliers and contractors. In addition, it would likely halt approximately \$44.8 million worth of ongoing capital improvements at these centers,^{7,8,9} which continue to rebuild after the extensive damage caused by Hurricanes Irma and María.

The Job Corps program represents a smart and strategic investment in Puerto Rico's future. In 2023, 27,098 teenagers between the ages of 16 and 19, representing 18% of all individuals in that age group, were not enrolled in school. Among these youth, nearly half (48%) were not participating in the labor force, and 18.4% were actively seeking work but unemployed. Further, in 2023, 33.4% of the total population living below the poverty level, or 291,109 individuals, had a high school diploma.¹⁰ These figures demonstrate that the work carried out by the Puerto Rico Job Corps centers is a necessity. Their holistic approach enables students not only to earn their high school diploma but also to transition into stable employment that allows them to support themselves and their families. The federal government cannot afford to eliminate programs that offer a lifeline to thousands of low-income youth and those from disadvantaged backgrounds.

The U.S. Department of Labor's (DOL) abrupt decision will have real consequences for the lives of young people and for the dedicated staff who have worked tirelessly to make these programs a beacon of excellence. We urge you to act swiftly to ensure that the Job Corps program remains fully operational and staffed nationwide and in Puerto Rico. Accordingly, we request written responses to the following questions no later than Monday, June 23, 2025:

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ Based on information shared by constituents, 87 students reside in the Arecibo Job Corps Center, and 200 reside in the Aguadilla Job Corps Center.

⁷ SAM.gov, Center Redevelopment at the Arecibo Job Corps Center, <https://sam.gov/opp/6df9fd5ef86c444a98db9ece159ad3d1/view> (last visited Jun. 10, 2025)

⁸ SAM.gov, Vocational Trades Expansion at the Ramey Job Corps Center, <https://sam.gov/opp/flcb11bfc476e9c266820704e8019db3/view> (Last visited Jun. 10, 2025)

⁹ SAM.gov, Design/Build Services for the Vocational Trades Expansions-Phase II at the Ramey Job Corps Center, <https://sam.gov/opp/79bf15cc1b7d4707bfa02893394b4c2a/view> (Last Visited Jun. 10, 2025)

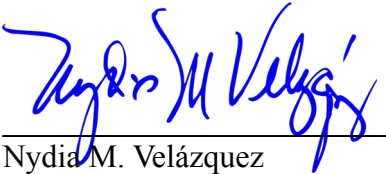
¹⁰ Instituto del Desarrollo de La Juventud, Puerto Rico, Family Data Center, <https://datos.juventudpr.org/en/reporte/jurisdicion/puerto-rico?selector207id=2023&selector39id=1>

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

1. What specific data informed the decision to phase out contract-operated Job Corps centers in Puerto Rico by June 2025?
2. Has DOL conducted an impact assessment of this decision, particularly on centers like those in Puerto Rico that rank among the top nationally?
3. How will DOL ensure that students currently enrolled are not left without housing, food, or access to training and healthcare services?
4. What criteria will DOL use to determine if a center should remain open under a different operating structure?
5. Will DOL commit to pausing implementation of this policy while Congress reviews the implications and stakeholders are consulted?

Thank you for your prompt attention to this matter.

Sincerely,



Nydia M. Velázquez
Member of Congress



Emanuel Cleaver, II
Member of Congress



Delia C. Ramirez
Member of Congress



Rashida Tlaib
Member of Congress



Darren Soto
Member of Congress



Pablo José Hernández
Member of Congress