



March 20, 2017

The Honorable Ricardo Rosselló Nevares
Governor of Puerto Rico
La Fortaleza
PO Box 9020082
San Juan, PR 00902-0082

Dear Governor Rosselló:

On behalf of Puerto Rico Limpio, I write today to request your assistance in addressing an urgent public health and environmental crisis: the need for immediate closure of 70% of Puerto Rico's municipal landfills that violate federal and local laws.

As you prepare to testify before Congress, Puerto Rico Limpio strongly urges you to publicly commit to closure, and to seek federal assistance in closing these illegal landfills in order to bring our solid waste management system into full compliance with the rule of law.

In fact, the Congressional Task Force on Economic Growth in Puerto Rico has already expressed its concern over the situation with Puerto Rico's toxic landfills, and urged Congress to examine "additional steps" it could take to address it.

The situation at the Toa Baja municipal landfill underlines the urgency of this matter. Widespread dumping and the illegal expansion of the landfill continues, exposing residents to toxic fumes, contaminated waters, and illicit gas that poses an imminent danger of explosion and fire. This has made the neighborhood of Candelaria unsafe, and uninhabitable for its residents.

Worse, the Toa Baja municipal landfill – which is owned by the Puerto Rican Government– was ordered by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency in 2008 to stop receiving waste when it was determined this posed a health risk, but these orders were ignored. The Garcia Padilla Administration, led by then Secretary of Natural and Environmental Resources Carmen Guerrero and Environmental Quality Board Presidents Laura Velez and Weldin Ortiz, did nothing. The EPA under Region 2 Administrator Judith Enck, and Caribbean director Carmen Guerrero, also did nothing.

Governor, you have the opportunity to change this. You ran for and have governed to date on ensuring Puerto Ricans are not treated as second-class citizens. You have the power to close the landfill. You have the authority to ask the EPA for immediate financial and technical assistance.

As citizens of the United States, no Puerto Rican should be subjected to and forced to live in these conditions, especially when the law expressly forbids it. The people of Candelaria, like in many affected communities, are begging us for help every day. It is time to uphold the rule of law, and close these illegal landfills.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'HJM', with a stylized flourish at the end.

HIRAM J. TORRES MONTALVO
Co-Founder

CC: The Honorable Scott Pruitt, Director, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
The Honorable Jenniffer Gonzalez, Resident Commissioner
The Honorable Tania Vázquez Rivera
The Honorable Thomas Rivera Schatz, President, Puerto Rico Senate
The Honorable Carlos J. "Johnny" Méndez Núñez, President, Puerto Rico House of Representatives