



Policy Implications of COVID-19 on Puerto Rico's Children, Youth, and Families

Bruce Lesley

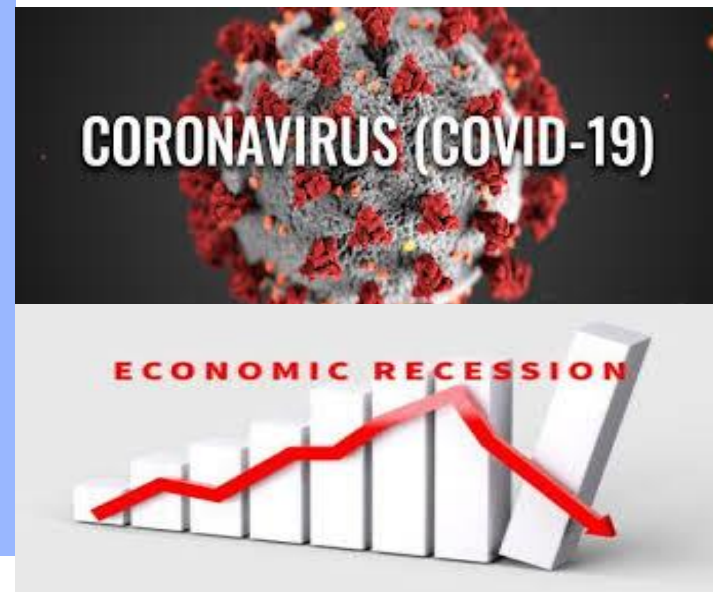
President, First Focus on Children

APRIL 15, 2020



The Kids Aren't All Right

This is likely a once-in-a-generation disaster, and it will affect every domain of human life. It will be traumatic. And trauma always falls hardest on the youngest among us. . . All the evidence suggests that children — and poor children especially — will bear an incredible burden during the coronavirus pandemic and the attendant economic shocks. But that evidence has trouble breaking into a national conversation dominated by mortality rates and work-from-home strategies. — Vann R. Newkirk II, “The Kids Aren’t All Right,” The Atlantic





POINT OF VIEW

By Amanda Rivera Flores



COVID-19, Child Poverty and Political Will

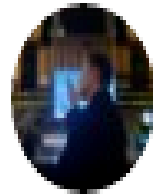
“An in-depth analysis is not necessary to know that the new COVID-19 crisis means it never rains, but it pours for Puerto Rican children, living in poverty and having suffered the impacts of Hurricane Maria, the financial crisis and the earthquakes.”

“Every Aspect of Children’s Lives Is Being Impacted”

“People have been saying, ‘Oh, coronavirus doesn’t affect kids — the kids are all right,’” said Bruce Lesley, the president of First Focus on Children, an advocacy group. “They’re so not. They’re at greater risk of sexual assault, suicide, substance abuse, hunger — every aspect of children’s lives is being impacted.”



“Kids Are Essentially Immune”



Elon Musk ✓ @elonmusk · Mar 19

Kids are essentially immune, but elderly with existing conditions are vulnerable. Family gatherings with close contact between kids & grandparents probably most risky.



“Families First Coronavirus Response Act” (H.R. 6201) and “Coronavirus Aid, Relief, Economic Security (CARES) Act” (H.R. 748)

General

- \$150 billion for states, territories, localities, and tribes

Health

- Medicaid and CHIP will cover diagnostic testing
- Temporary increase in Medicaid federal matching rate (FMAP)
- Community health centers receive \$1.32 billion in emergency funds

Hunger and Nutrition

- \$500 million for WIC
- \$15.5 billion for SNAP (food stamps)
- \$300 million for food assistance for Puerto Rico and the territories
- Emergency Pandemic Electronic Benefits Transfers for children

Millions of low-income children are still waiting for federal food aid



(CNN) Millions of low-income children who can no longer get free meals at school because of the [coronavirus crisis](#) have yet to receive additional [federal assistance](#) promised to them by Congress.

“The Department of Agriculture only recently approved the first state plan to give low-income families money in place of the meals their children would have received in school for free or a reduced price. This provision, called Pandemic EBT, comes to about \$114 a month per child, which is the value of a free breakfast and lunch for five school days a week.”

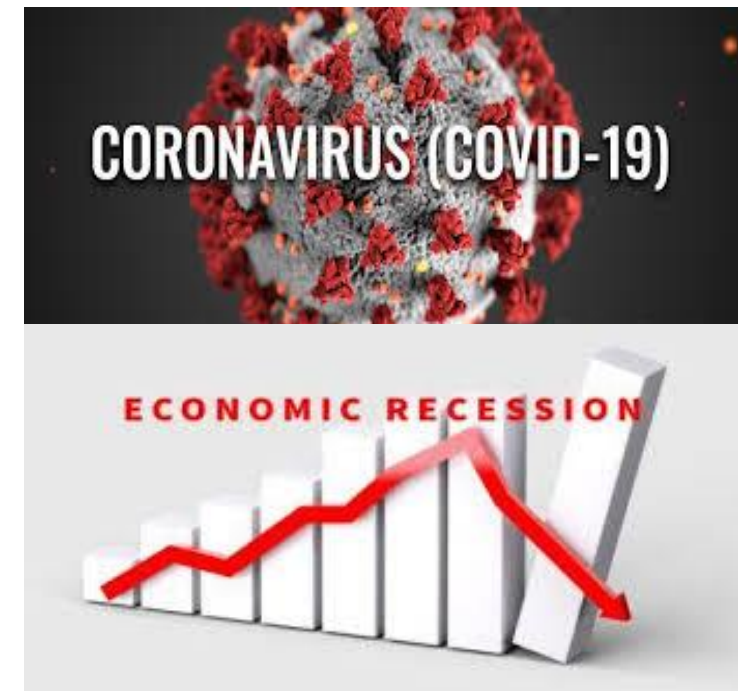
“Families First Coronavirus Response Act” (H.R. 6201) and “Coronavirus Aid, Relief, Economic Security (CARES) Act” (H.R. 748)

Cash Assistance

- \$1,200 for adults and \$500 per child
 - Problems for babies, kids 17- and 18-years-old & college students
- \$1 billion for Unemployment Insurance

“The needs of a child – their shelter, their food, their care, their educational supports, etc. – are not 41.7 percent of the needs of an adult.”

– “The COVID-19 Crisis Is Catastrophic for Children Too,”
Medium



“Families First Coronavirus Response Act” (H.R. 6201) and “Coronavirus Aid, Relief, Economic Security (CARES) Act” (H.R. 748)

Education

- \$13.5 billion for Elementary and Secondary Emergency Relief Act
- \$14 billion for higher education institutions

Housing

- \$3 billion for rental assistance
- Prohibits landlords from evicting or charging penalties for non-payment for 120-day period
- \$50 million for Legal Services Corporation
- \$4 billion for homelessness
- \$25 million for Runaway and Homeless Youth Act Programs

“Families First Coronavirus Response Act” (H.R. 6201) and “Coronavirus Aid, Relief, Economic Security (CARES) Act” (H.R. 748)

Early Childhood

- \$3.5 billion for Child Care Development Block Grant
- \$750 million for Head Start and Early Head Start

Child Welfare

- \$45 million for Title IV-B services, which can help foster parents, kinship caregivers, and residential providers
- \$45 million for violence prevention and response services

Other Notable Funding

- \$5 billion for Community Development Block Grant (can be used for child care centers, food banks, etc.)

UNICEF: “Children are the hidden victims of the coronavirus crisis.”



UNICEF @UNICEF · Apr 9

Children are the hidden victims of the coronavirus crisis.

Unless we act now to address the pandemic's profound impacts, the echoes of #COVID19 will permanently damage our shared future.

@unicefchief

Children are the
hidden victims of the
coronavirus crisis.

0:01

Don't let children be the hidden victims of COVID-19

www.unicef.org

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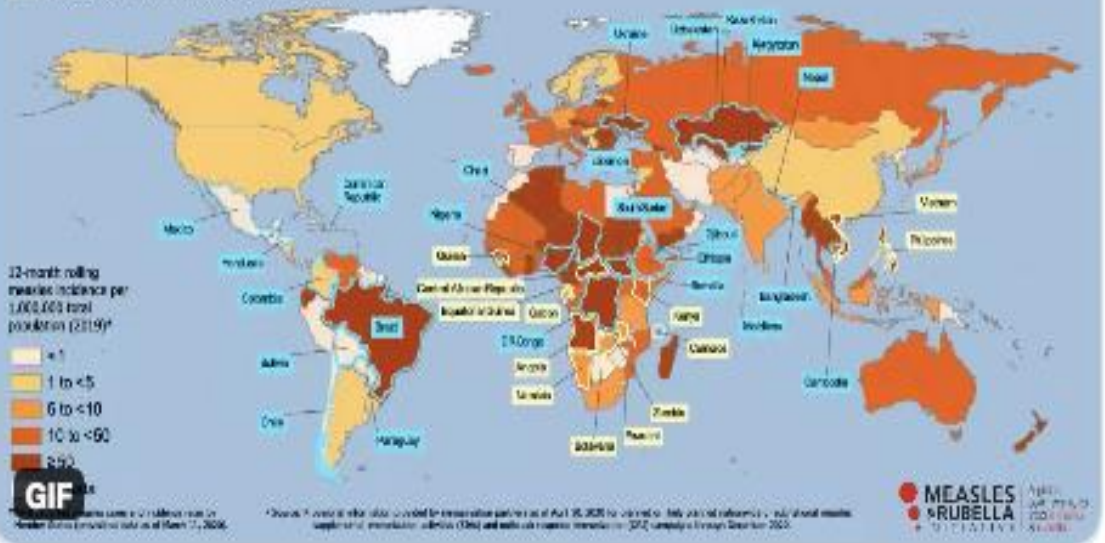
CDC Global Health @CDCGlobal · Apr 14

Over 117 million **children** in 37 countries may miss out on receiving life-saving measles vaccine in 2020, as **COVID-19** surges worldwide. Read @MeaslesRubella Initiative, including CDC, statement of support and potential impact on at-risk **children** - bit.ly/2XGCvks

More than 117 million children at-risk of missing out on measles vaccines, as COVID-19 surges

Postponed measles vaccination campaign?

Measles vaccination campaign may be postponed?



28



524

740



Every Aspect of a Child's Life Is Being Impacted



HuffPost Politics ✓
@HuffPostPol



Schools are struggling to educate 7 million students who receive special education services in the absence of physical classrooms. huffp.st/jArGNkF



How Children With Disabilities Are Getting Left Behind

Schools are struggling to educate 7 million students who receive special education services in the absence of physical classrooms.
huffpost.com

♡ 9 12:52 PM - Apr 4, 2020



First Focus on Children
@First_Focus



Coronavirus and schools: Free meals are (and aren't) getting to kids - Vox bit.ly/2JotOmZ



♡ 1 9:51 PM - Mar 28, 2020



Every Aspect of a Child's Life Is Being Impacted



Jimmy Hinton
@JimmyHinton12



Abuse cases spike dramatically:

"Officials with Cook Children's Medical Center in Fort Worth, Texas reported seven cases of severe child abuse between Tuesday, March 17 and Saturday, March 21. Two of those children died from their injuries." fox6now.com/2020/03/23/tex...



Texas hospital sees spike in severe child abuse cases possibl...

FORT WORTH, Texas -- Officials with Cook Children's Medical Center in Fort Worth, Texas reported seven cases of severe child abuse between Tuesday, March 17 and Saturday, March 21. Two of those children died from their injuries. fox6now.com

♥ 5 3:02 PM - Mar 25, 2020



Annie E. Casey Fdn
@AECFNews



"You have families that don't have stable housing, stable income. Maybe there's a mental health challenge or a substance abuse problem — and now the schools are closed... That is a recipe for disaster." bit.ly/3axxeQx



Coronavirus roils every segment of US child welfare system

Child welfare agencies in the U.S. have a difficult mission in the best of times, and now they're scrambling to confront new challenges

local10.com

♥ 24 8:30 PM - Mar 31, 2020



Children in Confined Settings Are Particularly Vulnerable



Loyola Law School
@LoyolaLawSchool



"Juveniles in detention are especially vulnerable during pandemics," writes Juvenile Justice Clinic Dir @SamBuck4JuvJust in Justice Collaborative Institute report, "To Protect Our Children & Fight the Coronavirus, Release Youth from Juvenile Detention." dataforprogress.org/memos/releasin...



Memo: To Protect Our Children and Fight the Coronavirus, Re...
In a national poll, we found broad bipartisan public support for releasing early some youth held in detention
dataforprogress.org

♡ 3 8:35 PM - Apr 3, 2020



Mariya Parodi
@MariyaParodi



🗣️ Each day that a child is in immigration detention is a day that poses greater and greater risks for COVID-19. When protecting public health rests on access to care for all, ICE endangers not only these children's health but also jeopardizes the public. 📌
amnestyusa.org/press-releases...

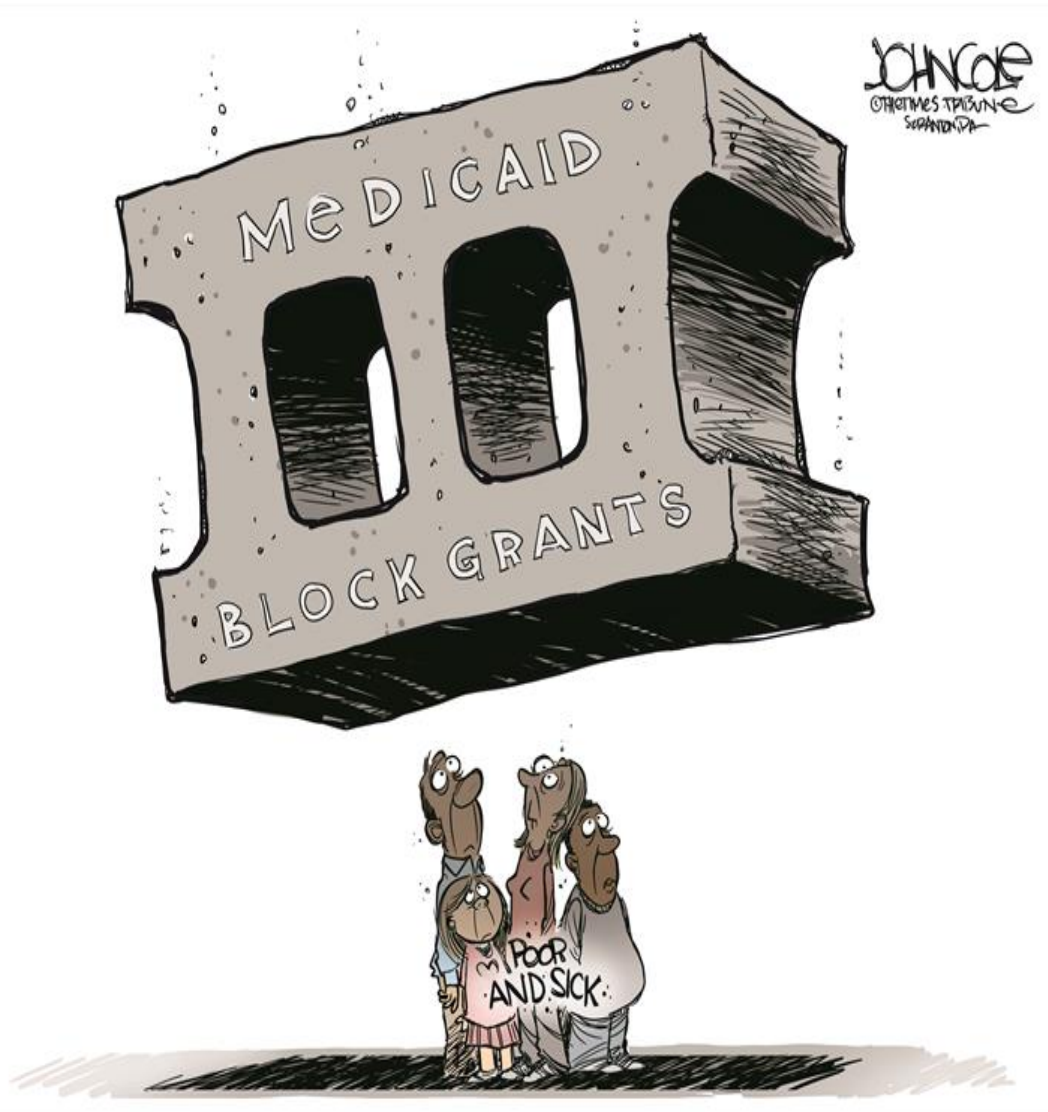


COVID-19 risks grow for children in immigration detention
We don't know enough about how this pandemic can affect children. But what we do know is no child should be in immigration detention
amnestyusa.org

♡ 1 2:04 PM - Mar 29, 2020

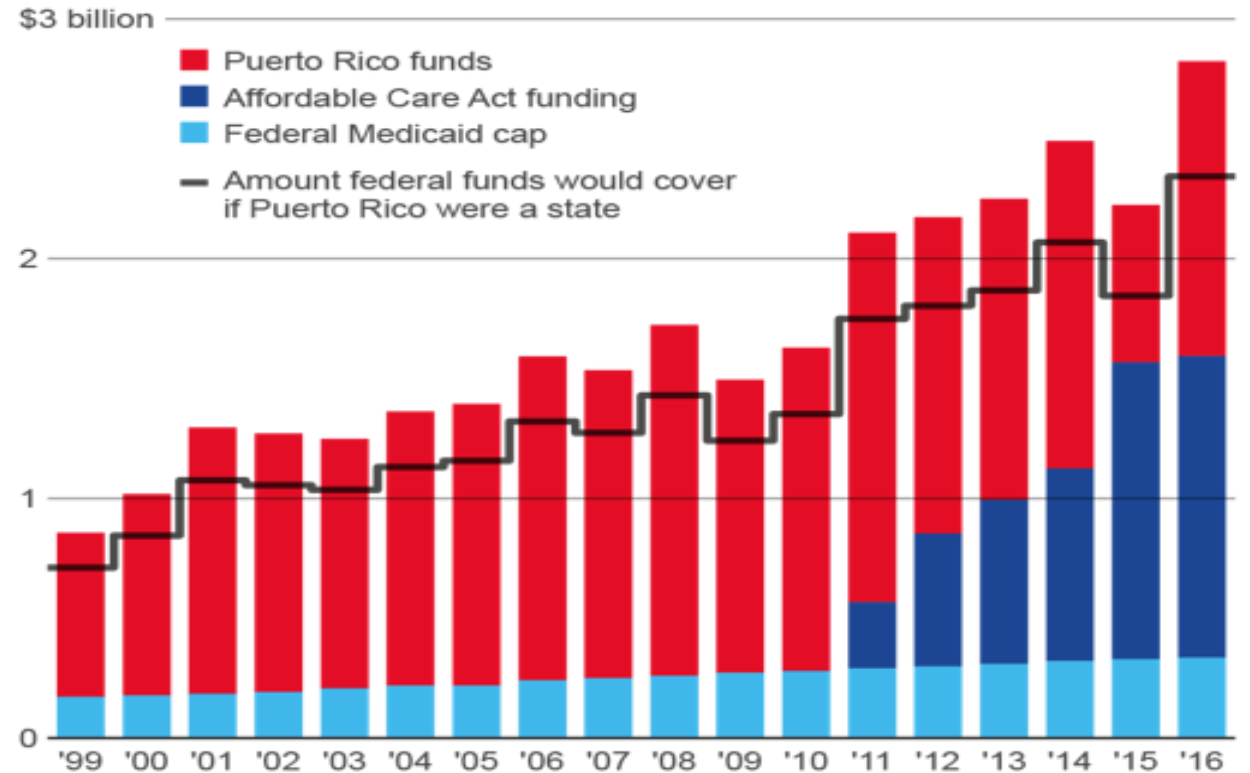


A Child Is A Child: Puerto Rico and Medicaid Block Grants



Falling short

The federal government's annual contribution to Puerto Rico's Medicaid insurance program for the poor is capped at a level much lower than what Washington gives to the states. The island covers the difference itself and, more recently, through a one-time payment under the Affordable Care Act, which is expected to run out next year.

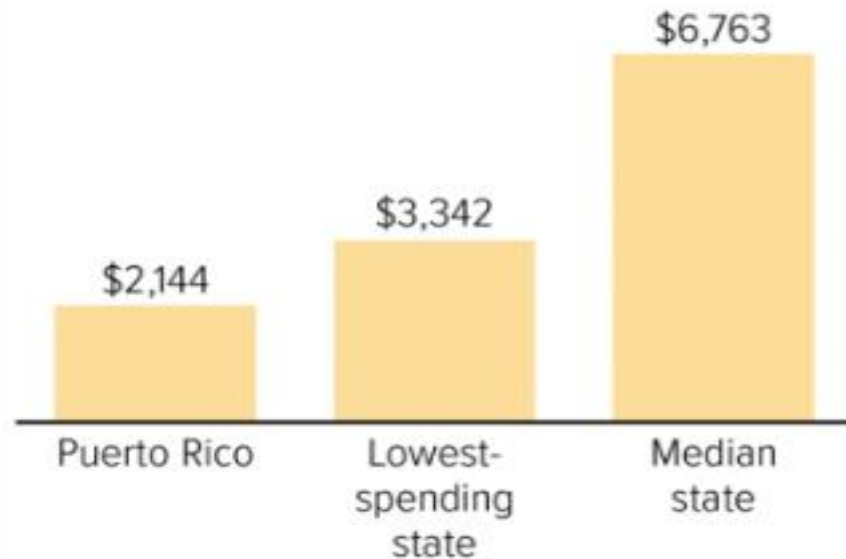


Sources: Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services; Health Insurance Administration of Puerto Rico

A Child Is a Child: Puerto Rico and Medicaid Block Grants

Medicaid Benefits Per Enrollee Much Lower in Puerto Rico Than in Any State

Benefit spending per full-year enrollee, fiscal 2020 projection



Source: Kacey Buder and Chris Park, "Medicaid in Puerto Rico: Financing and Spending Data Analysis and Projections," Medicaid and CHIP Payment and Access Commission

CENTER ON BUDGET AND POLICY PRIORITIES | CBPP.ORG

First Focus on Children Testimony to House Health Subcommittee on Medicaid Block Grants - Feb. 29, 2016:

“The effects on Puerto Rico’s children have been devastating. Doctors are fleeing to the mainland or refusing to accept patients on Medicaid, leaving children without access to pediatric and preventive care.”

children and coronavirus

A GUIDE FOR FAMILIES AND PROVIDERS

IRWIN REDLENER, MD

SUPPORTING OUR CHILDREN

As the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic continues to evolve, a child's natural curiosity and ultimately their concerns may grow with the current and increasing uncertainty. The guidelines below are intended for parents, caregivers, educators, and child care providers on how best to care for and communicate with children. You are encouraged to actively engage in an open dialogue with children in ways that are appropriate for their child's age, developmental stage and state of mind. No matter what, the core messages should remain clear, simple, and consistent.



You are the buffers for your children. Every parent and caregiver must be the most reliable source of information and support. Nearly all of us are experiencing some level of concern, and perhaps even serious anxiety, about the challenges we are facing in this unprecedented world of the COVID-19 pandemic. That said, to the extent possible, we must try to shield our children from our own concerns and anxieties as much as possible. Children can sense and absorb the emotional state of their parents.

National Center for
Disaster Preparedness
EARTH INSTITUTE | COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY

Source: <https://ncdp.columbia.edu/>

Problems with Medicaid Block Grants

- Arbitrary Caps: do not adjust for need, such as changes in –
 - population/demographic change
 - natural disasters
 - economic recessions
 - public health crises
 - medical breakthroughs/cures
- Lead to rationing of care
- Pit populations against each other



A Child Is a Child: Puerto Rico and Medicaid Block Grants

Equity and fairness demands that we treat all American citizens fairly and equitably.



Bruce Lesley
@BruceLesley

This tragic health care story from Puerto Rico 🇵🇷 has a long history of failure to treat fellow American citizens equitably. [#HealthEquity](#) (1)



David Begnaud ✓ @DavidBegnaud · Jun 1, 2018

Outside the capitol in San Juan, Puerto Rico, right now, these shoes have been placed to honor the 4600+ people that Harvard University estimates died because of Hurricane Maria, most because of a lack of access to medical care, say researchers.



“The Children Aren’t All Right” by Vann Newkirk II, *The Atlantic*



...the most likely outcome is that this pandemic, like most others in history, will again uncover our most basic inequities. For children and their parents, that might mean that mortality rates are only the beginning of the story.



Thank You!



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