

Del. James Moylan (GU-00)

T-HUD

Thank you, Mr. Chairman and Ranking Member for holding this hearing and for all the work you do in funding critical agencies like the Department of Transportation and the Department of Housing and Urban Development. Gov-Guam agencies rely heavily on federal grant funding in order to supplement their meager local budget. Without robust funding for these grants, our local agencies will struggle to properly provide for our constituents. Guam's Port, Airport, Housing and Urban Renewal Authority, and Department of Public Works need funding for grant programs that benefit communities in the States and Pacific Territories.

In FY23, the Won Pat Guam International Airport in Tamuning greatly benefitted from the Department of Transportation's Airport Improvement Program. Thanks to this grant, the airport has been able to start addressing their structural deficiencies. Last year, Guam International was awarded for 5 projects- ranging from airport security improvement to construct and rehabilitation projects like the one for Guam's apron. Since Andersen Airforce Base is restricted to Department of Defense, Guam International is the only airport on island for civilian use. This makes grants like the Airport Improvement Program vital for Guam. With the anniversary of Typhoon Mawar approaching, I am reminded of how vital the airport was in disaster recovery efforts, allowing for emergency response personnel to rapidly assist those living in Guam and address construction problems. Alongside disaster recovery and the previously mentioned FY23 projects, the Airport Improvement Program has undoubtedly proven itself as an essential part of building Guam's capabilities and it should be funded to the highest possible levels.

HUD's Community Development Block Grant for the Insular areas is a lifeline for our local Guam Housing and Urban Renewal Authority. GHURA is currently fighting a losing battle on island to ensure that there is enough housing for the ever-growing population of COFA migrants coming from Palau and the FSM. The existing housing supply is stretched thin due to the complications associated with building resilient housing on island, and this issue will be exacerbated by the continuing military buildup. Guam expects to add thousands of marines relocating from Okinawa over the next few years, and there is not enough housing on bases. This means these service members will take their Off-base Housing Allowance outside of the fence, driving up the cost for housing for those civilians on island. Service members housing allowances have led to the creation of an inflated floor for the cost of rent for everyone on island and local wages are not always able to meet these dizzying costs.

The Insular CDBG needs more funding so that GHURA can build more affordable housing on island, this is a simple supply and demand issue, if we are not building enough housing, then it will become increasingly difficult for civilians to afford rent or their own homes going forward. Insular CDBG grants have not been increased in years, and with massive inflation and they tyranny of distance, the funds do not go as far as they used to and GHURA is struggling to make up the shortfalls.

I thank you for the opportunity to testify today and yield back.