



Congresswoman Kimberlyn King-Hinds

Before the House Armed Services Committee

Member Day Testimony

May 20, 2025

2118 Rayburn House Office Building

Thank you, Chairman Rogers, Ranking Member Smith, and Members of the Committee on Armed Services, for the invitation to submit testimony on our nation's Defense priorities as you craft the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2026.

I request that you consider two proposals for inclusion in the 2026 NDAA.

My first request is to extend the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands Immigration Transition Period to support the long-term workforce needs of employers in the Marianas. Under current law, the CNMI is exempt from the numerical limitation on H-visas pursuant to 48 U.S.C. § 1806(b)(1)(A). However, this exemption only applies during the transition period. Without further action, the exemption will expire in 2029.

Extending the transition period through 2039 will ensure continued access to critical labor resources, including skilled foreign workers needed to support defense infrastructure, without modifying the separate numerical limits on the Commonwealth-Only Transitional Worker (CW-1) program.

Suggested legislative text:

Section 6 of the Joint Resolution entitled “A Joint Resolution to approve the ‘Covenant To Establish a Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands in Political Union with the United States of America’, and for other purposes” (48 U.S.C. 1806) is amended— (1) in subsection (a)— (A) in paragraph (2), by striking “2029” and inserting “2039”.

My second request is to eliminate the requirement that CW-1 workers depart the United States between their second and third renewals. This rule, though well-intended, has created significant administrative burdens and delays, particularly for employers supporting Department of Defense initiatives and federal infrastructure projects in the Marianas.

This technical change will streamline access to labor without altering the intent or scope of the transition program.

Suggested legislative text:

Section 6 of the Joint Resolution entitled “A Joint Resolution to approve the ‘Covenant To Establish a Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands in Political Union with the United States of America’, and for other purposes” (48 U.S.C. 1806) is amended—

in subsection (d) by amending paragraph 7 to read:

“(7) Permit duration –

(A) In general.-Except as provided in subparagraph (B)-

(i) a permit for a Commonwealth Only Transitional Worker shall remain valid for a period that may not exceed 1 year.

(B) Long-term workers.-An alien who was admitted to the Commonwealth as a Commonwealth Only Transitional Worker during fiscal year 2015, and during every subsequent fiscal year beginning before July 24, 2018, may receive a permit for a Commonwealth Only Transitional Worker that is valid for a period that may not exceed 3 years and may be renewed for additional 3-year periods during the transition period. A permit issued under this subparagraph shall be counted toward the numerical cap for each fiscal year within the period of petition validity.”

Finally, I urge the Committee to support enhanced federal oversight of foreign investment in the Northern Mariana Islands, particularly regarding the lease or transfer of public lands to foreign entities. Given the CNMI’s strategic importance to U.S. defense posture in the Indo-Pacific, we must safeguard against malign influence from adversarial foreign governments, including the Chinese Communist Party.

As part of the reauthorization of the Defense Production Act, I request that the Committee include an amendment to require mandatory declarations under Committee on Foreign Investment in the United States (CFIUS) review for such transactions:

50 U.S.C. § 4565(b)(1)(C)(v)(IV), as amended, by inserting after subitem (gg) the following:

“(hh) The Committee shall prescribe regulations requiring that any lease, transfer, or concession of public lands in the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands to a foreign person be treated as a covered transaction subject to the mandatory declaration requirements of this subclause.”

I thank the Committee for its consideration of these proposals for inclusion in the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2026 and reauthorization of the Defense Production Act. I also thank the Committee for its support in the expansion of military activity in the Northern Mariana Islands and for working with me as these plans continue to develop. The military buildup and presence in the Marianas region will have long-term consequences for the people I represent; and I appreciate the partnership of this Committee in managing these developments in the best interest of my constituents and of the national security needs of our nation.