

**Congressman Sablan's Statement**  
**House Committee on Energy and Commerce**  
**Health Subcommittee**  
**Member Day Hearing**  
**July 25, 2019**  
**12:00 P.M. (Tentative)**

Thanks to Chairs Pallone and Eshoo and to Ranking Members Walden and Burgess for the opportunity to provide testimony to the Health Subcommittee today. And thanks to all the Members of the Committee for reporting favorably the Reauthorizing and Extending America's Community Health "REACH" Act last week.

This health extenders package is good news for the Marianas and all the insular areas. It reauthorizes critically important Community Health Centers, of which the Marianas has one. Most importantly, it includes the Territories Health Care Improvement Act, addressing the Medicaid cliff the insular areas face, when special Obamacare funding ends this year.

Thanks, also, to Mr. Soto and Mr. Bilirakis of the Committee for understanding the urgency of this insular Medicaid crisis. They put together the Territories Health Care Improvement Act with myself and 7 other original, bipartisan cosponsors to give Puerto Rico the help it needs. And the bill also becomes the means to help the four smaller insular areas.

It provides just what the Marianas Medicaid Director told this Committee she needed - \$60 million per year. No local match is required for the first 2 years, which will allow the Marianas government to direct more money to help recover from last year's typhoons. And, after six years, we will get the best FMAP that any state is offered.

This legislation will make the insular Medicaid programs more "state-like" in other important ways. New program integrity requirements, which I support, assure that every federal dollar is used as intended. Having a better record of utilization, enrollment, and expenditures will allow for a greater understanding of the unique health care challenges the insular areas face and, I hope, provide a basis for the policy that comes after.

Because, as grateful as we are that the Medicaid cliff is being addressed - and in a way that matches need - we know two things from experience with the ACA's Medicaid fix:

1) Time will pass quickly. The ACA fix lasted 8 years. Then we had the present crisis. The current legislation will last for 6 years. Perhaps, with the better understanding we expect to gain over

that time we will be able to fix the problem once and for all, and treat Americans living in the US insular areas like all other Americans when it comes to Medicaid.

2) The second lesson: Humility. We may think that the funding we are providing to each insular area meets their needs and their capacity to use the money. But we learned over the course of the ACA that our predictions are not always accurate. Some of the insular areas used their ACA money. Some did not. Some ran out of funding because their needs were greater than Congress foresaw - and Congress had to intervene with stopgap measures. Some areas are leaving money unspent after 8 years.

We should learn from that experience. Emergencies arise that cannot be predicted. The recently enacted disaster supplemental included my amendment to provide an additional \$36 Million in Medicaid funds for the Marianas, because with last year's typhoons our program was down to its last dollars. In the seven weeks since enactment 60% of those funds are already expended and the balance is scheduled for expenditure by September 30.

Emergencies arise. So, I would humbly suggest that some mechanism be built into the REACH Act to make sure its funds can be reallocated, if necessary. I know our staff have discussed this problem, but without resolution. And I would suggest that all of us ask our staff to work a little harder, so we do not repeat that mistake of the Affordable Care Act.

Again, I thank the Health Subcommittee for favorably reporting the Territories Health Care Improvement Act. And I thank the full Committee for bundling it into the REACH Act. You have made a great step forward to ensure that health care in the insular areas can be as good as health care anywhere in America.

**[660 words ~ 5 minutes]**