

## **Questions from Committee Members**

**Questions from Rep. Sablan for The Hon. Donna Christensen, Former U.S. Representative, U.S. Virgin Islands.**

**1. What does it mean to you, that a President of the United States is calling for parity for the territories in three major safety net programs our country offers? Are these three enough**

### **Response:**

**Most Presidents have not made references to the Territories on any subject, so for President Biden to come out publicly and in the important Budget message to say that we must have parity is very significant. It sets the tone and a goal for the Congress to meet. The three programs that he specifically mentioned are especially important and they are ones that we have unsuccessfully fought for state like treatment on for decades. While the words are important, it must be followed with avid pursuit of those goals by the White House and relevant members of the Cabinet. But stating his intention to see it happen is a critical impetus for that effort.**

**It is important that state like treatment be extended to any programs where there is no parity. As I said in my testimony, we need to have poverty levels set at levels that utilize the same factors that are used for Hawaii and Alaska; we need to have annual community surveys because conditions will fluctuate within the 10 years between censuses, and the federal programs must respond accordingly. Population cannot be the only determining factor for funding levels, our costs of providing services are higher, the level of need should also be considered. And importantly, the Insular Case decisions that influence so many issues affecting us, need to be overturned. The President cannot do it, but his Justice Department must no longer use them as precedent and he should make his desire to have them overturned known.**

**We must no longer be treated as second class citizens, but have every right, privilege and program that are available in the States, available to us, American Citizens in our nation's Territories.**