

**Representative Cliff Bentz Opening Statement**  
**Legislative Hearing on H.R. 6504, the Pacific Islanders of America Equity Act**  
**House Committee on Natural Resources**  
**Thursday, February 17, 2022 - 4:00 PM**

Thank you, Vice Chairman Sablan, and thank you to the witnesses for joining us today.

The purpose of today's hearing is to hear testimony regarding H.R. 6504, the Native Pacific Islanders of America Equity Act.

The Chamorro people are the native people of Guam and the Northern Marianas Islands. The history of the Chamorro dates back 3,000 to 3,500 years, when seafaring peoples migrated from Southeast Asia and settled in the Northern Marianas.

During WWII, many Chamorros were forced into helping Japanese forces during the Guam and Northern Marianas occupations.

In short, the bill before us today, H.R. 6504, does three things for the Native Chamorro people in Guam and the Northern Marianas.

First, it would amend the Guam Organic Act to establish a Chamorro Registry Program under the office of the Governor.

A person who submits a request to the office must be able to provide evidence that documents that they, or a direct ancestor, were residing in Guam on or before August 1, 1950.

Additionally, the Guam Office of Public Auditor is required to ensure the accuracy of the database every three years.

The bill would amend the Small Business Act to define the term Native Chamorro Organizations in Guam and the Northern Marianas and make them eligible for the 8(a) program.

Codifying these organizations in statute removes a “rebuttable presumption” that a Chamorro organization or individual is socially and economically disadvantaged.

The 8(a) program provides participating socially or economically disadvantaged small businesses with technical assistance, training and government contract opportunities through set-aside and sole-source awards.

Lastly, the bill would amend the Small Business Act to include Native Chamorro organizations in Guam and the Northern Marianas as a small business concern for the purposes of the SBA HUBZone program.

Participating small businesses are located in areas with low income, high poverty, or high levels of unemployment with contracting opportunities in the form of set asides, sole-source awards, and price-evaluation preferences.

Currently there are six HUBZone types. According to the SBA HUBZone map, both Guam and the Northern Marianas are currently qualified nonmetropolitan counties.

While Congress has amended the Small Business Act to statutorily add specific small business concerns as socially and economically disadvantage, I believe it is unfortunate that the Small Business Administration is not part of today’s panel.

I would like to work with you to receive views from the agency.

Lastly, I believe we must work in close collaboration with our colleagues in the Small Business Committee, which has primary jurisdiction over these two SBA programs, to ensure the adequate processes for implementation are in place before the bill proceeds through the legislative process.

Thank you and I yield back.