



# Office of the Speaker **THERESE M. TERLAJE**

*I Mina'trentai Sais na Liheslaturan Guåhan* | 36th Guam Legislature  
Committee on Health, Land, Justice and Culture

February 17, 2022

**The Honorable Raúl M. Grijalva**

Chairman

U.S. House of Representatives

Committee on Natural Resources

1324 Longworth House Office Building

Washington, DC 20515

**Re: Testimony in Support of H.R. 6504, the Native Pacific Islanders of America Equity Act**

Håfa Adai and our warmest greetings from Guam, Honorable Chairman Grijalva, Honorable Vice Chairman Sablan, Honorable Ranking Member Congressman Bentz, and Members of the Committee:

I am Speaker Therese Terlaje of the 36th Guam Legislature, a unicameral body with 15 senators representing a population of 153,836. I introduced Guam Legislature Resolution No. 260-36 (COR) which expresses the support of the Guam Legislature for H.R. 6504. We expect to vote on this resolution later today during our first day of session and will transmit it to your Committee immediately.

Native CHamorus have a history of 4000 years on Guam and the Marianas. Following a 300-year occupation by the Spanish and the Treaty of Paris in 1898, the CHamorus on Guam lived under US Naval rule, followed by civilian governors appointed by the President of the United States. The Native CHamoru suffered a brutal three-year occupation by the Japanese during WWII, land takings by the United States government of almost all of Guam and wherein the US Department of Defense now still occupies and controls one third of our island. In 1950, the US Congress enacted the Organic Act for Guam, and conveyed US Citizenship. Only in 1970 was Guam allowed to elect its first Governor.

Despite our people's resilience, the CHamorus continue to suffer from the highest incidences of poverty, diabetes, and cancer mortality. Using 2010 census data, 22.5% of all individuals on Guam for whom poverty status was determined were considered to be in poverty, and based on our population data from the 2020 census, 30% of our population was enrolled in Medicaid and 34% of the population qualified for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP).

My colleagues and I are in support of H.R. 6504 because it will bring equity in certain federal contracting preferences and training opportunities to Native CHamorus and to the Native CHamoru nonprofit organizations that will be established pursuant to this bill to assist the government in addressing economic and health disparities suffered by Native CHamorus. The success of the current

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Section 8(a) program and HUBZone programs is evident in helping meet critical needs for Native Hawaiians, Alaskan Natives, and the Native Americans. Again, equity for Native CHamorus will serve a similar purpose.

The definition of Native CHamoru in this bill is tied to 1950 and does not describe the native inhabitants of Guam prior to the 1521 contact with outsiders, prior to the over 300-year occupation by the Spanish, prior to the Treaty of Paris, prior to US Naval rule, prior to World War II occupation of Guam by the Japanese, or prior to the 1950 conveyance by the United States Congress of citizenship on the residents of Guam; but I believe for purposes of this particular small business program that this definition will adequately address the disparity and significantly help to remedy the needs of Native CHamoru businesses of Guam as was the goal of the Section 8(a) programs.

In 2007, CHamoru owned businesses comprised only .01% of all the businesses in the United States. Currently, there are only seven companies located on Guam that avail of the Section 8(a) program as a minority owned business. Ninety percent of all businesses on Guam are small or micro businesses and report less than \$500,000 in annual revenue. Passage of this bill would create incentives for businesses to apply for the 8(a) program because as Super 8(a) businesses, they could continue in the program longer than the 9-year limit and they would benefit tremendously from technical assistance provided by the Small Business Administration. H.R. 6504 would boost Guam's 8(a) portfolio numbers and thus provide a stronger platform of federal contract opportunities for Native CHamoru firms.

Parity for Native CHamorus in federal contracting preferences and community benefits associated with Native CHamoru nonprofit organizations is long overdue and necessary to assist socially disadvantaged and economically disadvantaged groups, as recognized in Congressional findings in establishment of the Section 8(a) and HUBZone programs. We humbly ask for the Committee's support on H.R. 6504 and hope to see its passage.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak on this important measure. I am happy to provide any additional information requested by the Committee.

Sincerely,



Therese M. Terlaje  
Speaker, 36th Guam Legislature

Attachment: Resolution No. 260-36 (COR)

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