

A Testimony in Support of HR2899

Chairman Joe Neguse, Ranking Member Fulcher, Members on the Committee of Natural Resources Subcommittee on National Parks, Forests, and Public Lands, and other distinguished members present,

Hafa Adai, Good afternoon, and Good Morning! The daily story of the United States of America is lived across 9 time zones that include Guam's CHamoru Standard Time (CHST) and that I am proud to say that Guam had always had its message to the nation and the world that this is where America's Day Begins.

I am Joe Quinata, Chief Program Officer of the Guam Preservation Trust. I would like to introduce the Guam Preservation Trust, a non-profit, public corporation since 1990 that has been tasked to be an advocate for historic preservation and to provide opportunities for the local community to learn and gain a better sense of the history of Guam's people and places and to carry on the legacy and traditions of Guam's cultural heritage. The vision that Guam's heritage preservation is a public responsibility through education, cooperation, and advocacy, is the impetus of a movement to preserve and protect what the local community value and commit to sustain the heritage and beauty of the island and to guard and protect it for the future.

We are pleased to support HR 2899, an Act to direct the Secretary of the Interior to conduct a study to assess the suitability and feasibility of designating areas within the island of Guam as a National Heritage Area, and for other purposes. We passionately believe the provisions and outcomes of this Act aligns with our vision and mission and as a local preservation organization with over 30 years in leading the issues of preservation, conservation, and heritage tourism, the Guam Preservation hereby submit this testimony with great candor.

The Guam Preservation Trust has built relationships with local, regional, and national partners in addressing issues facing Guam and the Pacific that range from the effects of climate change on natural resources and historic sites, invasive species threatening cultural heritage, and the potential direct and indirect effects to historic and cultural resources from the impending U.S. Military relocation to Guam.

Tourism is a key economic driver in Guam and studies have shown that it is the local culture unique to Guam that motivates travelers who wish to experience Guam's people and their ways of life. As the local community appreciate the values of historic preservation and understand its role in economic development and the revitalization of local communities, and at the same time respecting the delicate nature of the environment, that a sustainable community will be realized.

We acknowledge that as National Heritage Areas are designated by Congress, we also hold paramount that places that matter to us define who we are and how we continue to preserve these places that embody the memories and identity of the people of Guam as part of America's story. While we look forward to the conclusion of the study, we suggest and support a focus feature of the Latte on Guam and the Mariana Islands, the ultimate pillar and symbol of the CHamoru people in the Marianas.

In closing, the Guam Preservation Trust welcome and embrace all our partners in shaping the future of Guam's heritage. In Guam, we say *Si Yu'os Ma'åse*, a genuinely warm thank you to the Honorable Joe Neguse, Chairman of this sub-committee, Honorable Russ Fulcher, Ranking Member, and all the members on the Committee on Natural Resources, including our Congressman, the Honorable Michael San Nicolas, and other delegates from the territories which whom we all would agree that our stories in the territories need to be heard in the overall story of America, and we are glad that this feasibility study may bring us one step closer in that direction.