

**TESTIMONY OF
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AMBASSADOR OF THE REPUBLIC OF THE MARSHALL ISLANDS TO THE
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
TO THE
U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
COMMITTEE ON NATURAL RESOURCES
SUBCOMMITTEE ON INDIAN AND INSULAR AFFAIRS
HEARING ON
THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE
COMPACT OF FREE ASSOCIATION ACT OF 2024**

January 14, 2026

Mr. Chairman, Madame Ranking Member, and Members,

Kommool tata. Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today to provide an update on implementation of the Compact of Free Association Act of 2024, which approved and added to the 2023 amendments to the Compact between the Republic of the Marshall Islands (RMI) and the United States of America.

The Compact and the Compact Act form the legal, fiscal, and strategic foundation of the RMI–US relationship, advancing United States national security, regional stability, and the long-term resilience of the Marshallese people. I appreciate the Subcommittee’s continued leadership in convening oversight hearings that recognize Compact implementation as an ongoing responsibility requiring sustained interagency coordination beyond enactment.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF CONGRESS AND BIPARTISAN LEADERSHIP

At the outset, I would like to acknowledge Congress’s essential role in enacting the 2023 Amended Compact into law and in supporting the RMI–US relationship throughout the past year.

The completion of the Amended Compact legislation reflected sustained bipartisan leadership in both Houses of Congress. That leadership has continued into the implementation phase through appropriations decisions, statutory oversight provisions, and direct engagement with the U.S. Executive Branch to ensure that Compact Act commitments are executed consistent with congressional intent.

I acknowledge the pivotal roles of Chairman Westerman, the late Ranking Member Grijalva, Delegate Radewagen, and Subcommittee Ranking Member Leger-Fernandez in advancing the Compact amendments and enactment of the Compact Act.

Over the past year, Congress has worked closely with the Republic of the Marshall Islands on issues reinforcing Compact implementation, including protection of RMI citizens’ eligibility

for federal programs, legislation related to veterans' health care, and targeted appropriations, such as funding to re-establish the Head Start program in the Marshall Islands.

STRATEGIC IMPORTANCE OF COMPACT IMPLEMENTATION

For the Republic of the Marshall Islands, effective Compact implementation is central to national development, fiscal sustainability, and long-term self-reliance. Predictable, timely, and coordinated implementation is not merely a funding issue; it is a prerequisite for macroeconomic stability, social cohesion, and national resilience.

Compact implementation strengthens public financial management and oversight institutions, reinforcing transparency, accountability, and donor confidence while supporting private-sector development and sustained economic growth.

For the United States, the Compact is a strategic instrument advancing core national security and foreign-policy objectives in the Pacific. It preserves strategic control across a vast maritime domain, enables forward military presence, and anchors a trusted partnership in a region of increasing geopolitical competition.

Successful implementation advances mutually reinforcing objectives—political stability, economic resilience, accountable governance, and U.S. national and regional security.

Development outcomes reinforce stability; stability enables security cooperation; and strong institutions underpin both. Conversely, implementation delays or inconsistent interpretation risk undermining trust and strategic credibility.

IMPLEMENTATION ARCHITECTURE AND INTERAGENCY COORDINATION

Since enactment of the Amended Compact, the Government of the Republic of the Marshall Islands has focused on translating statutory commitments into a durable implementation architecture capable of functioning across budget cycles and administrations. This approach emphasizes long-term fiscal sustainability, institutional strengthening, and system-wide absorption capacity.

Compact implementation remains inherently complex, requiring alignment among appropriations, agency guidance, administrative systems, and execution capacity across two sovereign governments with different institutional scales. On the RMI side, this has required sustained coordination across ministries and strengthening procurement, financial management, internal controls, audit readiness, and reporting capacity within the constraints of a small-island administration.

On the U.S. side, effective implementation depends on disciplined interagency coordination among departments operating under distinct statutory mandates and administrative cultures. Timely issuance of guidance, consistent interpretation of Compact provisions, and clear delineation of agency roles are essential to prevent implementation gaps or conflicting expectations.

Timely government-to-government communication is central to effective coordination. Where interpretive or sequencing issues arise, delays in response have created uncertainty for implementing ministries and slowed execution despite appropriated funds. Continued congressional oversight remains essential to reinforcing interagency discipline and supporting timely resolution of implementation challenges.

STATUS OF SECTOR GRANT IMPLEMENTATION

Health

Compact health funding has stabilized service delivery, supported workforce retention, and strengthened institutional capacity in a system facing persistent staffing shortages, geographic dispersion, and high operating costs.

Implementation of the \$8 million Supplemental Health Grant remains delayed due to unresolved interpretive issues regarding the definition of “programs” under the Amended Compact. The RMI has requested prompt government-to-government engagement to resolve this issue and enable timely deployment of resources essential to continuity of care.

Education

Education sector grants have supported foundational system improvements, teacher recruitment and retention, and alignment with workforce development objectives, including progress on the Early Childhood Education Draft Policy. These investments are designed to improve human capital outcomes over a multi-year horizon.

Infrastructure and Bonding

In infrastructure, early Compact funding has focused on planning, design, and preparatory activities for projects that are resilient, economically transformative, and strategically relevant. These investments are central to supporting economic growth, strengthening national resilience, and advancing projects with long-term development value.

As Compact implementation proceeds, a significant challenge has emerged with respect to bonding requirements for Compact-funded infrastructure projects. Revised interim bonding guidance issued by the United States represents an effort to address earlier concerns; however, the revised framework continues to impose bonding, guarantee, and financial capacity requirements that most local contractors are structurally unable to meet due to limited access to insurance markets, bonding instruments, letters of credit, and other financial tools that are not available in the Marshall Islands.

Historically, bonding requirements in the Republic of the Marshall Islands have been implemented through a framework that balances accountability, risk mitigation, and strict fiscal control. For more than two decades, Compact-funded and donor-funded infrastructure projects have operated under a ten percent bonding standard, administered alongside a reimbursable payment system enforced by the RMI Government.

Under this framework, contractors pay the full bond premium—typically approximately three percent of the total project cost—upfront. Contractors are required to secure comprehensive insurance coverage, including all-risk insurance, with the project owner named as an additional insured. All mobilization and construction costs are financed by the contractor in advance. There are no advance payments, including for mobilization, materials, or startup expenses.

Compact infrastructure payments are made exclusively on a reimbursable basis. Contractors are compensated only after work has been completed, inspected, and verified. Payments are tied to defined milestones and delivered outputs, not estimated progress or projected costs. Prior to the release of any payment, the RMI Government, acting through its designated construction manager—the Project Management Unit under the Ministry of Public Works, Infrastructure and Utilities—verifies that the claimed work reflects actual, measurable completion; that labor and materials incorporated into the work have been fully paid; and that the work complies with contractual and technical specifications.

In addition, ten percent of each approved progress payment is retained. Fifty percent of the retained amount is released upon substantial completion of the project, with the remaining fifty percent released only after expiration of the warranty period, typically one year following completion. Collectively, these controls ensure that contractors remain financially at risk until projects are completed, inspected, and accepted, and that public funds are disbursed only after performance has been demonstrated and verified.

Recent correspondence from the United States Administration has characterized bonding challenges in the Marshall Islands as arising from deficiencies in audited financial statements or contractor experience. That characterization does not accurately reflect conditions on the ground. There are Marshall Islands-based contractors audited by internationally recognized firms, including Ernst & Young, with demonstrated experience delivering complex infrastructure projects under United States federal technical and compliance standards. The long-standing ten percent bonding framework, combined with reimbursable payments, retainage, mandatory insurance, and inspection-based verification, has operated for more than twenty years without defaults attributable to local contractor performance.

The principal constraint faced by local contractors is not performance risk, but the absence of a functioning surety market willing to operate in remote Pacific jurisdictions. Bonding structures that require higher percentages, government guarantees, letters of credit, or full collateralization exceed what is achievable in the Marshall Islands and effectively preclude capable local firms from bidding as prime contractors.

These constraints have immediate implications for Compact-funded infrastructure. The Republic of the Marshall Islands is planning the construction of a new national hospital, with an estimated cost of up to \$100 million. Under the bonding framework proposed in recent United States correspondence, local contractors would likely be excluded from bidding as prime contractors—not due to lack of technical capacity or performance history, but due to lack of access to financial instruments unavailable in the local market. In practice, these same firms would nonetheless be expected to perform substantial portions of the work as subcontractors to an external prime contractor. The proposed bonding approach therefore does not reduce project risk,

but instead alters contracting structures in a manner that undermines local participation, workforce development, and institutional capacity.

The economic implications are significant. With overall unemployment estimated at approximately 40 percent and youth unemployment among those ages 18 to 29 estimated by some studies to approach 70 percent, Compact-funded infrastructure projects represent one of the few viable pathways for job creation, skills development, and private-sector growth. Policies that unintentionally limit local participation risk accelerating outward migration rather than promoting economic stability and long-term self-reliance.

In addition, requiring the RMI Government to assume additional contingent liabilities could adversely affect the Government's financial statements and undermine its ability to access concessional financing and grants from multilateral development partners. These sources of financing remain essential to supporting development priorities beyond the Compact framework.

For these reasons, the Republic of the Marshall Islands seeks the restoration of the ten percent bonding standard. This standard reflects more than two decades of established practice under a reimbursable payment system that safeguards public resources, ensures accountability through inspection and verification, and supports effective implementation of Compact-funded infrastructure while enabling local economic participation.

TUNA RECLASSIFICATION AND ECONOMIC IMPACT

As the Republic of the Marshall Islands (RMI) advances implementation of the Amended Compact of Free Association, consistent application of Compact commitments across U.S. agencies remains essential to achieving shared objectives of economic stability, self-reliance, and regional security.

A significant implementation challenge has emerged as a result of the unilateral reclassification by U.S. Customs and Border Protection of tuna harvested in the Republic of the Marshall Islands Exclusive Economic Zone. For more than three decades, tuna harvested within the RMI Exclusive Economic Zone under licenses and charter arrangements issued and regulated by the RMI Government was treated as Marshall Islands–origin product for entry into the United States. In October 2025, that longstanding practice was reversed without prior consultation with

the government of the RMI, with tuna reclassified as foreign origin based solely on vessel flag. This reclassification violates binding U.S. laws and treaty obligations.¹²³⁴⁵⁶⁷

As a result of this reclassification, Marshallese tuna entering the United States is now subject to a 45 percent tariff, effectively closing the U.S. market to fresh Marshallese tuna by rendering exports commercially unviable. The tuna fishery is a cornerstone of the Marshall Islands economy, contributing more than thirteen percent of national government revenue and supporting employment, food security, and economic stability across the country.

From the Marshall Islands' perspective, this issue goes directly to Compact implementation. The Compact of Free Association provides tax and duty exemptions for products of the Republic of the Marshall Islands exported to the United States and reflects an expectation of consultation and coordination on actions that materially affect the Marshall Islands economy. Abrupt policy shifts that undermine a key economic sector strain implementation efforts and risk eroding the stability the Compact is intended to promote.

The Government of the Republic of the Marshall Islands remains committed to resolving this matter through constructive government-to-government engagement, consistent with the Compact. The RMI believes this issue can be addressed in a manner that preserves economic stability, supports Compact objectives, and respects U.S. national security and trade interests.

1 Congress mandates a place-of-harvest origin rule for wild fish Under 7 U S C § 1638a and NOAA/AMS regulations, origin is determined by where the fish is harvested, including within a nation's EEZ

2 Under 50 C F R § 216 3, the "harvesting nation" is the government that licenses, regulates, and monitors the vessels In this situation, that nation is the RMI, whose authority governs each step of the harvest (regulations promulgated pursuant to N O A A 's authority under the Marine Mammal Protection Act (M M P A))

3 Pursuant to that authority, N O A A relies upon Form 370 to identify and track the harvesting nation and defines a certified charter vessel to mean "a fishing vessel of a non-U S flag nation, which is operating under the jurisdiction of the marine mammal laws and regulations of another, harvesting, nation by a formal declaration entered into by mutual agreement of the nations "

4 The U S Department of the Interior Fish & Wildlife Service promulgated regulations, reviewed by CBP, that define the country of origin of wild fish to be the place of harvest See 50 C F R § 10 12 (*Country of origin* means the country where the animal was taken from the wild, or the country of natal origin of the animal ") and 45 Fed Reg 56668 (Aug 25, 1980) ("The Service has reviewed these regulations which are enforced by the Service with the cooperation of the U S Customs Service and other Federal and State agencies ") FWS Regulations govern imports of fish under a multitude of statutes See 50 C F R 10 1

5 The RMI has by law accepted responsibility for the fishing operations of certified charter vessels It has asserted jurisdiction over fishing vessels operating in its EEZ through the Marshall Islands Marine Resources Act of 1997 See, e.g., Article 146 of the Second Extension to the Treaty on Fisheries between the Governments of Certain Pacific Island States and the Government of the United States of America (aka the South Pacific Tuna Treaty Act of 1988) and Section 1 listing the Marshall Islands Marine Resources Act of 1988 (since amended by the Marshall Islands Marine Resources Act of 1997) as an applicable national law

6 The National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2026, Title LVII, section 5721 *et seq.* extended the South Pacific Tuna Act of 1988 (16 U S C § 973) implementing the South Pacific Tuna Treaty, specifically with respect to the fishing in licensing area defined to include a party's EEZ (*see* amendment to U S C § 973 (8))

7 According to Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission (WCPFC) attribution rules, catch harvested under RMI charter in the RMI's EEZ is attributed to the RMI, not the vessel's flag State See WCPFC Record of Fishing Vessels and Authorization to Fish, Conservation and Management Measure 2018-06 (15th Regular Session, at Honolulu, Hawaii, 10-14 December 2018) Section B 9 -10 ; see also, id Section C 21 The United States and RMI are each members of the WCPFC and are bound by its regulations

TRUST FUND AND FISCAL ACCOUNTABILITY

The RMI–US Compact Trust Fund is a cornerstone of the long-term Compact framework and a critical pillar of fiscal sustainability for the Republic of the Marshall Islands. The Trust Fund is established as a nonprofit organization incorporated in Washington, DC, with fiduciary, governance, and oversight obligations that reflect its unique role at the intersection of international agreement, U.S. law, and the RMI’s national public finance system. Its effective operation is essential to ensuring that Compact Act resources are managed responsibly, deployed as intended, and positioned to support long-term economic stability and self-reliance.

In December 2025, the Republic of the Marshall Islands and the United States achieved an important milestone with the successful execution of distributions under Articles 17 and 18 of the Trust Fund Agreement for the first time since enactment of the Amended Compact and its related agreements. This marked a transition from legal and institutional design to operational execution. These distributions reflected sustained technical engagement between our governments, coordination through the Trust Fund’s governing bodies, and adherence to fiduciary, compliance, and reporting requirements consistent with both the Trust Fund Agreement and applicable U.S. nonprofit governance standards.

This initial execution also underscored that Trust Fund implementation is an iterative and maturing process. The Trust Fund operates within a complex legal and financial environment—combining the requirements applicable to a Washington, DC–incorporated nonprofit entity with the obligations of an international agreement and the practical realities of national budget execution in a small island developing state. As with other trust fund arrangements globally, early implementation has highlighted areas where further policy alignment and procedural clarity will strengthen predictability, efficiency, and accountability over time.

One such area concerns the definition and interpretation of the term “programs” as used in Article 18 of the Trust Fund Agreement and as previously noted, its relationship to the Supplemental Health Fund established under the Amended Compact. While the Trust Fund’s fiduciary and administrative structures are functioning as intended, the meaning and scope of “programs” is a policy issue rooted in interpretation rather than a purely technical or administrative matter.

The manner in which each government interprets “programs” has direct implications for eligibility determinations, budget formulation, expenditure authority, reporting requirements, and continuity of service delivery, particularly in essential sectors such as health. Differing interpretations, even when advanced in good faith, can introduce uncertainty and delay that were not contemplated in the original design of the Trust Fund and overall Compact framework.

Importantly, both the Republic of the Marshall Islands and the United States agree that there should be a single, mutually accepted interpretation of “programs,” applied consistently across the Trust Fund Agreement, the Amended Compact, and related implementation instruments. Consistency in interpretation is essential to policy coherence, administrative predictability, fiscal accountability, and faithful execution of congressional intent.

Formal government-to-government discussions to reconcile these interpretations have not yet taken place. The Republic of the Marshall Islands looks forward to engaging with the United States as soon as practical to address this policy issue directly and constructively. From the RMI's perspective, timely resolution through dialogue will provide the clarity necessary for effective implementation, reduce interpretive risk, and ensure uninterrupted utilization of Compact resources in support of agreed-upon outcomes.

Resolving this issue will further strengthen Trust Fund governance, reinforce fiscal accountability, and enhance confidence in the Trust Fund as a durable mechanism supporting long-term Compact sustainability. Continued congressional awareness and oversight will remain important as Trust Fund operations mature, helping ensure that policy alignment, fiduciary safeguards, and implementation practices remain consistent with legislative intent and the shared objectives of the Compact partnership.

FEDERAL PROGRAMS AND SERVICES AGREEMENT

The Federal Programs and Services Agreement clarifies the scope and continuity of U.S. federal programs and services in the Marshall Islands, supporting aviation safety, weather services, communications, postal systems, and financial stability. Effective implementation requires disciplined interagency coordination, timely guidance, and aligned interpretation. Together with the Compact and Compact Act, the FPSA provides a platform to advance broader shared strategic priorities and reinforce a modernized and durable RMI–US partnership.

ADVANCING SHARED STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

Beyond addressing implementation challenges, the Compact provides a powerful platform to advance shared strategic priorities between the Republic of the Marshall Islands and the United States. When implemented as an integrated framework—rather than as a collection of discrete sector grants—the Compact serves as a force multiplier for development, security, and long-term stability in the North Pacific.

The Republic of the Marshall Islands occupies a central geographic and strategic position in a region of increasing competition. In this context, infrastructure, logistics, connectivity, resilience, and human capital are no longer solely development concerns; they are strategic assets. Ports, airfields, energy systems, telecommunications networks, transportation corridors, and skilled labor capacity directly shape access, mobility, deterrence, and the ability of both nations to respond effectively to security and humanitarian, including disaster-response, contingencies.

The RMI strongly supports increased U.S. investment in dual-use infrastructure—projects that simultaneously serve civilian development needs and strategic or security functions. These include ports and maritime facilities; airports and aviation safety infrastructure; resilient and renewable energy systems; communications and digital infrastructure; and climate-resilient transportation and logistics hubs. Such investments improve daily life for Marshallese citizens by lowering energy costs, improving access to services, strengthening supply chains, and enabling private-sector growth, while also enhancing regional access, mobility, and operational readiness for the United States. Dual-use infrastructure ensures that free association investments generate

both developmental and strategic returns, reinforcing the Compact Act as a long-term strategic investment in a close partner.

For the Republic of the Marshall Islands, economic development, national resilience, and security are fundamentally interconnected. Infrastructure that improves connectivity, reduces vulnerability to external shocks, and supports job creation strengthens social cohesion and reduces outward migration pressures. A population with access to reliable energy, transportation, and employment opportunities is better positioned to remain rooted in the RMI and contribute to national development. From the U.S. perspective, a stable and economically viable RMI reinforces strategic denial, enhances regional security, and supports sustained U.S. presence in a critical maritime region. Development outcomes achieved through Compact Act implementation, therefore, directly contribute to political stability and the durability of the bilateral partnership.

Workforce development is central to building the long-term capacity and resilience of the Republic of the Marshall Islands and is equally critical to sustaining the long-term U.S. military presence, particularly at Kwajalein Atoll. Developing a skilled local workforce in construction, engineering, energy systems, aviation, maritime operations, logistics, and base operations directly supports the operational needs of the U.S. military installation. Strengthening local labor capacity reduces reliance on third-country nationals to fill skilled labor vacancies required to operate and maintain the base. Over time, minimizing dependence on external labor pools enhances continuity of operations, reduces workforce and visa-related vulnerabilities, and mitigates broader national security risks associated with supply-chain and personnel disruptions. For the RMI, workforce development creates high-quality employment opportunities and anchors skilled citizens in the domestic economy. For the United States, it strengthens readiness, reliability, and the sustainability of its forward presence.

The new Workforce Pell Grant program established under the One Big Beautiful Act is well aligned with these shared objectives. Workforce Pell is designed to support short-term, high-demand training programs that lead directly to employment—precisely the type of programs needed to develop skilled Marshallese workers for Compact Act-funded infrastructure projects and base-related operations. An initial assessment prepared by the Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education indicates that, while the U.S. Department of Education’s preliminary rulemaking process excluded the RMI from eligibility, the regulations are not final and may still be amended prior to publication as a proposed rule. The core issue is eligibility, not program capacity or feasibility.

The RMI agrees with this assessment that the Department’s current interpretation is inconsistent with the governing statutory framework. Workforce Pell amends Title IV of the Higher Education Act, which explicitly defines “State” to include the Freely Associated States, including the Republic of the Marshall Islands. Moreover, the broader structure of the One Big Beautiful Act demonstrates clear congressional intent to treat the RMI as a State across multiple federal programs, explicitly including the RMI in several eligibility provisions. Where Congress intended to align new programs strictly with Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act definitions, it did so expressly elsewhere in the statute. The absence of such limiting language in Workforce Pell strongly supports the conclusion that the Higher Education Act’s definition controls eligibility.

The Republic of the Marshall Islands also views resilience as a core security issue. Rising sea levels, extreme weather events, and coastal erosion pose direct risks to communities, critical infrastructure, and U.S. strategic assets. Investments that strengthen infrastructure against these impacts protect lives, preserve economic activity, and safeguard long-term RMI and U.S. military interests. Resilient systems reduce future humanitarian and disaster-response burdens and enhance the ability of both nations to plan and operate with confidence.

Taken together, effective Compact implementation—aligned with dual-use infrastructure, workforce development, Workforce Pell eligibility, and resilience planning—advances a shared vision of stability, deterrence, and sustainable development. This integrated approach positions the RMI–U.S. partnership to meet evolving regional challenges while ensuring that Compact investments deliver enduring strategic and developmental value for both nations.

NUCLEAR LEGACY AND THE COMPACT PARTNERSHIP

The unresolved legacy of United States nuclear testing in the Marshall Islands remains a fundamental and enduring issue in the Marshall Islands–United States relationship. Between 1946 and 1958, the Marshall Islands was the site of extensive nuclear testing that produced profound and lasting effects on human health, the environment, patterns of displacement, and long-term economic development. These impacts are intergenerational in nature and continue to shape national resilience, social outcomes, and development pathways in the Republic of the Marshall Islands.

During congressional consideration of the 2023 Amended Compact and the Compact Act, Members of Congress emphasized the importance of continuity, stability, and strategic partnership between our two nations. In those deliberations, the Republic of the Marshall Islands was urged to proceed with Compact approval to avoid disruption to economic assistance, U.S. federal programs, and the broader strategic framework underpinning U.S. presence and regional security in the Pacific. At the same time, there was a shared understanding that the nuclear legacy would remain an open and continuing matter to be addressed following enactment of the Compact Act.

The Republic of the Marshall Islands agreed to the Compact amendments in good faith with that understanding. With the amendments now enacted and implementation underway, the RMI believes it is appropriate to advance the nuclear legacy. Consistent with provisions of the Compact Act, this approach reflects not a reopening of settled matters for confrontation, but a recognition that changed circumstances, evolving scientific evidence, and long-term impacts warrant careful reassessment consistent with the Compact and the Compact Act, the rule of law otherwise and mutual respect.

The RMI Government has established a Cabinet-appointed Changed Circumstances Petition Committee to conduct a comprehensive, evidence-based examination of the enduring consequences of nuclear testing. This includes long-term health outcomes, environmental degradation, displacement and land loss, socioeconomic disruption, and constraints on sustainable development. The Committee is also tasked with assessing how circumstances have materially changed since prior determinations and identifying lawful pathways for engagement consistent with applicable legal frameworks and the Compact relationship.

The Republic of the Marshall Islands also recognizes that the United States Congress has demonstrated an intent to engage constructively on the nuclear legacy, as reflected directly in many provisions of the Compact Act. For example, the Compact Act allocates \$5 million for the establishment of a nuclear legacy museum in the Marshall Islands, ensuring that the history and consequences of nuclear testing are formally documented, preserved, and never forgotten. This commitment reflects congressional acknowledgment that the nuclear testing program represents a defining chapter in the shared history of both nations and that its impacts merit permanent public recognition.

Another example is that the Compact Act provides \$10 million to enable the Republic of the Marshall Islands to access, review, and analyze declassified United States Government records related to the nuclear testing. This provision underscores congressional recognition that a full and accurate understanding of the testing program and its consequences depends on access to historical records and technical information that were not previously available. It also supports continued scientific, medical, and environmental analysis informed by documentary evidence.

Taken together, these and other Compact and Compact Act provisions reflect congressional intent to support transparency, historical clarity, and informed engagement on the nuclear legacy. While the provisions do not themselves resolve the broader issues arising from nuclear testing, these sections provide an institutional foundation for responsible dialogue and continued examination.

The current effort by the Republic of the Marshall Islands is not adversarial. It reflects a commitment to transparency, analytical rigor, and partnership. From the RMI perspective, meaningful progress on the nuclear legacy strengthens trust, reinforces regional stability, and enhances the long-term credibility of the Compact relationship.

The Republic of the Marshall Islands, therefore, respectfully looks to Congress as a continued partner in this effort, consistent with the understanding expressed during Compact amendments deliberations and the shared objective of ensuring that our Compact provisions remain comprehensive, principled, and forward-looking.

CLOSING STATEMENT

Members of the Subcommittee, the Republic of the Marshall Islands approaches implementation of the Compact of Free Association and the Compact Act as a shared responsibility grounded in mutual trust, accountability, and a long-term strategic partnership between sovereign nations.

As reflected throughout this testimony, the Compact is an integrated framework designed to advance U.S. and regional security, fiscal sustainability, infrastructure modernization, workforce development, and infrastructure modernization in general. Effective implementation, therefore, requires consistent communication, coordinated interagency execution, and policy decisions that reflect both congressional intent and the operational realities of a small island developing state.

The Republic of the Marshall Islands remains fully committed to transparency, prudent stewardship of public funds, and the successful implementation of the Compact Trust Fund and related agreements. Where challenges arise—whether related to bonding requirements, workforce

eligibility, federal program coordination, or differing interpretations of Compact provisions—we believe they are best addressed through timely, good-faith government-to-government engagement.

The Compact also reflects a shared strategic understanding: that a stable, resilient, and economically viable Marshall Islands directly advances United States national security interests in the Pacific. Investments that strengthen local capacity, expand workforce participation, and support sustainable development reinforce regional stability while reducing long-term risks associated with labor shortages, outward migration, and external influence.

Finally, the Republic of the Marshall Islands continues to engage constructively on the unresolved legacy of U.S. nuclear testing, consistent with the spirit of partnership that has defined our nations' free association for decades. We believe that this issue, like Compact and Compact Act implementation itself, warrants structured, responsible engagement informed by law, science, and shared values.

We remain committed to working closely with Congress and the United States Administration to ensure that the Compact and law deliver on these promises to the Marshallese people while advancing our shared strategic objectives in the Pacific.

Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today. I look forward to your questions.