



Office of the Speaker
TINA ROSE MUNA BARNES
I Mina'Trentai Singko Na Liheslaturan Guahan



06/04/2019

Douglas Domenech

Assistant Secretary, Insular and International Affairs
U.S. Department of the Interior
1849 C Street, NW
Washington, DC 20240

Re: Homelessness on Guam

Dear Mr. Domenech,

Hafa Adai, it was a pleasure meeting with you during your visit to our island paradise. We appreciate you taking the time and engaging in open dialogue with the 35th Guam Legislature and updating us on the progress of numerous issues pertaining to the technical assistance that your office under your leadership has provided to our island.

We would like to direct your attention to the 2018 Guam Homeless Point-In-Time Count Report. Thanks to the generous assistance of your federal counterparts, as policy makers we are able to get an in-depth analysis of our homeless population. It was recently reported that Guam has the second highest rate of homelessness of any state or territory in the nation. This report states that more than half of our homeless population come from the Compact nations. It is noted under section 141 of the Compact of Free Association Amendments, which is Public Law 108-188 "any alien who has been admitted under the Compact, or the Compact as amended, who cannot show that he or she has sufficient means of support in the United States is deportable".

I would like to state for the record, that in no way are we asking to deport these individuals who have no means of supporting themselves. This nation is founded on the ideal and belief that every individual can achieve the American Dream. Instead, we are asking for your partnership and cooperation to come to the drawing board with me, and let's think outside the box and find a solution to this issue.

As you know, Guam has a shortage of laborers. While we petition for exemptions to the H-2B restrictions to augment the shortage for the anticipated military buildup, we think we should also look at the approach of finding ways to develop the local labor force. As reported in the aforementioned 2018 report, a majority of those who are homeless reported that their barriers to seeking gainful employment are due to a lack of transportation, child-care, education, identification or even a mere \$20 for court and police clearances. With the right support, I think we can tackle both the issues of homelessness and labor shortage together and find a long-term solution.

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Also included in the 2018 report, is the statistic pertaining to the number of homeless children. 361 homeless children is clearly an issue that needs to be addressed imperatively. Foster families recently shared that one of the children that had to be rescued from sub-standard housing conditions had his foot eaten by rats. As a mother and grandmother, as well as the chairwoman on the Committee on Youth, the stories about children on the streets break our hearts.

Recently, as covered in the local media, there are two instances where homeless individuals have harassed tourists at a historic park and also commandeered a school bus stop. Guam's economy relies heavily on the tourism industry, and the safety of our children is a top priority.

While it would be nice to just petition for money from the Office of Insular Affairs to address these issues, we think what we need to do is come to the table, have an open dialogue and figure out the best way to address the issue at hand. At your earliest convenience, we would like to set up a conference call between our offices and the Policy Division with yourself to examine the possible avenues to address this matter.

Thank you for your time, as well as your continued support and advocacy of our Islands. I look forward to your favorable response.

Sincenru yan Magahit,

Tina Rose Muña Barnes

Speaker, 35th Guam Legislature

Amanda L. Shelton

Chairwoman on the Advancement of Youth, 35th Guam Legislature

Jose "PEDO" Terlaje

Chairman on the Committee on Public Safety, 35th Guam Legislature

Clynton E. Ridgell

Chairman on the Committee on Economic Development, 35th Guam Legislature

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