

## Testimony for Resolution 93-36 (LS)

Good morning Madam Speaker Terlaje and Senators \_\_\_\_\_.  
It feels good to be back here in these halls once again.

For the record, my name is Louise Borja Muna, former Senator, and now employed at Guam Radiology Consultants.

I am here to testify in support of the intent of Resolution 93 and the opportunity for the Legislature to collaborate with the administration on how to best prioritize the spending of the American Rescue Plan (ARP) funds.

As we sit in these halls and we think about what we would like to champion and how we could represent them by vocally proclaiming their need for funds to improve, rebuild, recover, and support all the years and years of issues and dilapidation of our Government due to lack of funding. All our wishes can finally come true with funds that are now available due to the pandemic emergency. We must not forget that all the issues we face today are not just issues that were created by the pandemic.

The American Rescue Plan should be prioritized as it is called, a rescue. A rescue from the turmoil that was created by the pandemic.

Our tourism industry flatlined. It seems that only a handful of our economic industry prevailed and still after a year and three months, businesses are slowly getting back into shape. Let us not forget that we lost a lot of businesses due to lack of customers.

I understand, just as you senators do and I'm sure the administration does too, that the larger percentage of the ARP funds should go to our healthcare industry. We finally have the millions needed to fund a new hospital and I'm glad we see that as a priority.

As I scrolled through Resolution 93-36, I read through all the Government of Guam agencies funding proposals. The Rise Act and the AIM program are past promises now being fulfilled with new funding opportunities. The \$35 million for GEDA for businesses is a very small drop in the bucket to assist small businesses that were negatively affected by the pandemic. Agencies are proposed to getting funding for technical upgrades from decades old software systems. It seems like a great overhaul to Gov Guam. Oh.. and not to mention money to the Guam Ethics Commission for training. Hmm...

Over \$600 million seems astronomical, but if you break it all down and divvy it up for all the Government's needs, \$600 million is nothing.

Right now, the \$233,156,322 recommended by Resolution 93 to expand healthcare that includes the \$200 million for the new hospital should be the utmost priority. The hospital was stretched to the seams and in dire need prior to the pandemic. The private hospital and the all the private clinics helped to maintain the public health emergency. Imagine the catastrophe that the pandemic would've caused to our island and our people if GMH didn't have the assistance from the private sector support.

I have only been in the clinic setting for under 6 months and I see and hear the cries and their exhaustion every day. They are tired. Private critical healthcare workers, at any time could've just kept health care within their means but they chose to be a part of the solution because they are true public servants in the healthcare industry. From the front desk clerks, to the maintenance and housekeeping units, to the schedulers and supply personnel, from the human resources department to the assistants, from the technicians to the nurses. They tirelessly worked just as hard as our government of Guam GMH & Public Health workers.

I combed through every page of H.R. 1319, “The American Rescue Plan Act of 2021”. On page 223, under the requirement use of funds, (A) is to respond to the Public Health Emergency with respect to the Coronavirus Disease 2019 or it’s negative impacts, including assistance to households, small businesses, and non-profits, or aid to impacted industries such as tourism, travel and hospitality.

(B) (and I highlight this because this is why I am here), is to respond to workers performing essential work during the Covid 19 public health emergency by providing premium pay to eligible workers of the State, Territory, or Tribal Government that are performing such essential work, or by providing grants to eligible employers that have eligible workers who perform essential work.

On page 224 – definitions of eligible workers means those workers needed to maintain continuity of operations of essential critical infrastructure sectors and additional sectors as each Governor of State or Territory, or each Tribal Government, may designate as critical to protect the health and wellbeing of the residents of their State, Territory, or Tribal Government. #3 defines premium pay as an amount of up to \$13 per hour that is paid to an eligible worker, in addition to wages remuneration the eligible worker otherwise receives, for all the work performed by the eligible worker during the Covid 19 public health emergency.

Such amount may not exceed \$25,000 with respect to any single worker.

In a March 23, Guam Daily Post article with Congressman Michael San Nicolas, he was quoted by saying “We have heard the calls for equity from our essential workers, and we are very pleased that the Senate enabled this provision for them to be eligible for additional pay.” He’s further quoted to say, “The local Government must now take the steps necessary to make essential worker compensation happen, and we look forward to those who have been on the front-lines sustaining our economy, health and safety, finally receive the support they deserve. Congressman San Nicolas said the legislation could include nurses as well as others whose continued work ensured people were able to get food and other necessities. He is further quoted on this article to say, “The provisions are to be established by the local Government. If they wish to include the private sector workers as I believe they should, they need to include that in their program specifics, then transmit to the Treasury for consideration.

Madam Speaker and Senators, I implore you to include private healthcare critical workers who helped to get Guam to where we are today. We are not out of the woods just yet and we need these critical workers. Healthcare does not begin and end in the Government. Private healthcare workers are tired too and need

to know that the Government appreciates everything they did for the community. Please add a provision in your resolution however way you see fit, to include private clinics too.

I'm almost positive the Governor and her administration is also listening to all the people of Guam. She is a nurse by trade. I hope she empathizes with ALL healthcare workers and not just within the Government. Senators, please fight for the private sector too. Without them, we may not be at this point in the pandemic. They deserve consideration in Resolution 93-36 and the Governor's plan as it is stated in H.R. 1319, The American Rescue Plan.

Thank you so much for giving me the opportunity to stand for all workers.

Si Yu'us Ma'ase,

Louise Borja Muna