



Office of Senator Telo T. Taitague

&

Office of Senator Joanne M. Brown

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Hagatna, Guam 96910

I Mina'trentai Siette Na Liheslaturan Guåhan • 37th Guam Legislature

March 24, 2023

The Honorable Therese M. Terlaje
Speaker
Mina' Trentai Siette na Liheslaturan Guåhan
Sent via: senatorterlajeguam@gmail.com

The Honorable Chris Barnett
Chairman, Committee on Education, Public Safety and the Arts
Mina' Trentai Siette na Liheslaturan Guåhan
Sent via: malafunkshun@guamlegislature.org

Subject: Request for Joint Oversight Hearing

Håfa adai Speaker Terlaje and Chairman Barnett,

Our foster care system has failed a child and it is our inherent duty to identify the weaknesses and vulnerabilities of our foster care processes to prevent further harm to Guam's foster children.

A news story appeared on local news outlets on Tuesday, March 21, 2023, regarding an investigation launched by the Office of the Attorney General of Guam into a man indicted for allegedly molesting a foster child placed in his care by the Department of Public Health and Social Services' division of Child Protective Services in February 2023.

News reports show that the record of allegations of child sexual assault against the individual in question date back to 2018. How could such a record of disgusting allegations go unseen by the Department of Public Health and Social Services, our Child Protective Services professionals and the Bureau of Social Services Administration?

We spoke adamantly against several well-meaning bills that sought to improve our foster care system in the 36th Guam Legislature. These bills, though introduced and passed with good intentions, may have improved the availability of foster homes for children in need, but they clearly did not strengthen the checks, balances and protections needed to adequately review those who apply to serve as foster parents, including existing foster parents.

In fact, we believe that these bills, in their attempt to improve the foster child placement process, favored speed over due diligence. This hindered our ability to thoroughly review the men, women and families who open their homes to children who come from backgrounds with abuse and trauma.

This incident demands that we take an in-depth look at the policies, processes and procedures of our foster care system and how our child welfare professionals and Public Health agencies carry out the mandates and regulations required for the safe placement of our community's most vulnerable children.

We respectfully demand that the Committees on Health and Public Safety hold a joint oversight hearing to convene a panel of those placed in authority from the agencies involved in the review and approval of foster parents and the placement of foster children.

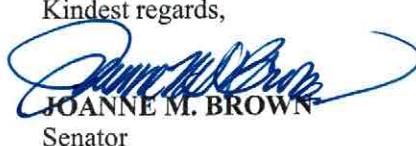
Please do not hesitate to contact me should you have any questions or wish to discuss this matter further.

Kindest regards,



TELO T. TAITAGUE
Senator

Kindest regards,



JOANNE M. BROWN
Senator