



SENATOR MARY CAMACHO TORRES

I Mina'Trentai Sais na Liheslaturan Guåhan 36TH Guam Legislature

DNA Building, Suite 807 | 238 Archbishop Flores St. | Hagåtña, Guam 96910

Phone: (671) 475-6279 Email: senatormary@guamlegislature.org

Local Survey Shows 98% in Favor of NLC

(February 3, 2021 – Hagåtña, Guam) Ninety-eight percent of local respondents or nearly 500 Guam nurses say yes to joining the Nurse Licensure Compact (NLC), according to study conducted by the Guam Board of Nurse Examiners.

That was the message this morning, along with other testimony in support of Bill No. 13-36 (COR), Senator Mary Camacho Torres' measure to add Guam to the NLC. If enacted, the bill would allow nurses to come to Guam and practice immediately, without the need to wait for a Guam nursing license or a disaster declaration.

"Guam's experience with the COVID-19 pandemic underscores the advantage Guam would have had if it was under the compact," said Bernadette Santos, Chair of the Guam Board of Nurse Examiners. *"If Guam became a member of the NLC today, travel nurses with multi-state licenses could immediately begin working on Guam."*

This is a benefit that recent Compact members like New Jersey have used to quickly bring nurses into their state during the COVID-19 pandemic. Even though New Jersey is not able to issue multistate licenses to their residents yet, out-of-state nurses with multi-state licenses were able to practice in New Jersey immediately.

"WE LACK Specialty nurses to assist in specialized areas of the hospital...the intensive care unit, the emergency room and operating room. Adoption of the NLC is one vehicle that will promote recruitment of nurses to our Island," said Zennia Pecina, Administrator of the Health Professional Licensing Office. *"The care of our people during the pandemic was dependent on the hiring of travel nurses. A temporary measure with a huge price tag attached to it."*

Supporters also took time to address myths about outmigration that were circulated last term.

"If compact states were experiencing a large exodus of nurses, then they would have left the NLC long ago," said Jim Puente, Director of the Nurse Licensure Compact. *"The NLC has been operating for over 20 years and no state has ever repealed the NLC. In fact, the NLC has only continued to grow in state participants."*

To date, there are 34 Compact states with legislation filed from 8 additional states, and 5 more anticipated to introduce, including California, Nevada, Illinois, Pennsylvania, and Massachusetts.

Senator Torres' pursuit to include Guam is part of a multi-pronged strategy to address Guam's long-standing nurse shortage. In addition to recruitment efforts, Senator Torres authored P.L. 35-125 to fund a previously mandated nurse pay study out of her office budget.

"We should do all we can to increase local nurse salaries, but recruitment and retention aren't mutually exclusive," said Senator Torres. *"I don't claim that Bill 13 is perfect or that it will solve all our problems. I just don't pretend to know better than the health care experts who asked for this bill."*

The GBNE survey results can be found in the appended testimony submitted by Ms. Bernadette Santos.

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For more information, please contact the Office of Senator Mary C. Torres at senatormary@guamlegislature.org or (671) 475-6279.

**Testimony of Bernadette Santos, MPA, BSN, RN
Chairperson, Guam Board of Nurse Examiners**

**Committee on General Government Operations
Wednesday, February 3, 2021**

Testimony in Support of Bill 13-36

Good morning Chairperson San Agustin and Senators of the 36th Guam Legislature. Thank you for the opportunity to share my written testimony. My name is Bernadette Santos, and I am the Chairperson of the Guam Board of Nurse Examiners. I have been fortunate to serve on the Board of Nursing for the past 5 years. I am also the nurse manager for the Guam VA Clinic in Agana Heights. I'd like to state that my testimony today is not any reflection on the part of the Department of Veterans Affairs.

As I begin my testimony in support of Bill 13-36, I'd like to thank Chairperson San Agustin and bill sponsors Sen. Torres, Sen. Muna Barnes and Sen. Shelton. Thank you for moving the NLC forward showing your commitment and support for the nursing community by scheduling this public hearing very early in this new term of the 36th Guam Legislature.

I'd like to briefly acknowledge the work of that of our former executive officer, Marlene Carbullido, and fellow board member/former GBNE Chair, Dr. Kevin Hitosis, who brought the idea of exploring NLC for Guam back in August of 2017. It was during a networking conversation with Mr. Jim Puente at the National Council of State Boards of Nursing Annual Conference that the concept of Guam becoming a member of the NLC was initiated. I'd like to also acknowledge our current executive officer, Ms. Zennia Pecina who literally hit the ground running her first day of work with GBNE in 2019. She oriented quickly and since then has facilitated preparatory steps in anticipation of NLC membership.

I've had the opportunity to learn about the NLC over the past 3 years and I believe that enacting this legislation will be good for Guam. The Nurse Licensure Compact allows nurses with unencumbered licenses to have one license to practice in other compact states or jurisdictions. Over the course of this public hearing, you will hear testimony about the benefits of the Nurse Licensure Compact with respect to expanding access to care for the people of Guam, telehealth nursing, nursing education, nursing support in disaster relief, and support of military families. Thank you for allowing me to present my support for this bill from my perspective as the chair for the Board of Nursing.

The Council of State Governments website reports that there are more than 200 interstate compacts in the US and one of those compacts allows for us to use our driver's license to drive in any state or US territory. I would like to see Guam join in the Nurse Licensure Compact which would allow a nurse to physically or virtually practice in any of the 34 states that are currently a part of the NLC. It is with the understanding that anyone who possesses a driver's license has the knowledge and skills to safely operate a car in any US jurisdiction. In the same way, we can be confident in the nurse holding a multistate license because the NLC Commission established a set of 11 uniform requirements that a nurse must meet to be eligible to obtain a multistate nursing license.

As a board member, my mind is put at ease knowing that not only are we able to allow nurses to seamlessly practice on Guam, but that any nurse who comes to work on Guam under a multi-state license has no record of a felony or misdemeanor related to nursing practice. As one of the NLC uniform requirements, any nurse flagged with either of these in the mandatory local police and FBI background checks are deemed ineligible for a multi-state license. This serves as a protective layer for our island.

What is this NLC Commission that I just referenced? The heads of the state licensing boards become the Compact Administrator for their states and provide representation in the Interstate Commission of Nurse Licensure Compact Administrators. Per Bill 13-36, which is essentially the language all NLC states have adopted, Guam will have equal representation in the Commission. Guam's representative would be our GBNE Executive Officer. The NLC Commission meets annually, historically at the same time of the National Council of State Boards of Nursing Annual meeting. Zennia, our GBNE Executive Officer, Rosemary from the HPLO office and I along with our counterparts from the CNMI actually attended the last face to face NLC Commission meeting held during the 2019 NCSBN Annual Meeting in Chicago. Attendance to this annual meeting comes at no cost to the Guam Board of Nurse Examiners since travel funding for board members is provided by the National Council of State Boards of Nursing.

A question many ask is what is the associated cost of implementation of NLC? Joining the NLC not only opens up our island to any of the two million nurse who hold multi-state licenses, but also comes with the gift of the Optimal Regulatory Boards System known as ORBS which will revolutionize GBNE. ORBS will modernize operations at our Board of Nursing. According to the article, *Rising to the Challenge: ORBS*, found in the IN FOCUS Summer 2019 publication, ORBS is described as a "turnkey solution" for Boards of Nursing that will assist with license management and discipline enforcement across the lifespan of a nurse. Advantages cited in the article include digitizing paper processes and reducing the manual input of data. This has been especially burdensome for our GBNE staff during the pandemic. ORBS and all its advantages will come to GBNE with NLC membership at the price tag of ZERO dollars. This is a program that is worth over six hundred thousand dollars in its implementation year. In addition to the free installation of this program, NCSBN would absorb the cost for licensing, hosted infrastructure, professional services of deployment, maintenance, upgrades and ongoing support. This is a dream come true for boards of nursing. What would Guam's responsibilities be financially as an NLC member? As stated in the bill, there is a nominal fee of \$6000.00 per annum associated with NLC Membership. GBNE would identify a full time Project Manager who will run ORBS. From GBNE's perspective, based on the latest financial impact statement completed in January 2021, the projected revenue loss with NLC implementation will not greatly impact GBNE operations.

Being part of the NLC gives Guam marketers another bullet point in their advertisements to attract nurses to come to our beautiful island. We are always in a nursing shortage as others have previously testified about. With NLC membership, we'd be able to attract more nurses - particularly nurses who desire to live on US soil and closer to countries in Asia.

I've had the privilege of being the supervisor of four military spouse nurses, who although only worked for me for 1-2 years, provided critical support in my facility especially during the pandemic. All of the military spouse nurses expressed how much they liked Guam. In fact, one informed me that she and her active-duty husband love Guam so much that they put in an extension for a longer tour of duty. NLC would relieve military spouse nurses coming to Guam from having to endorse their licenses to obtain a Guam license. GBNE launched a survey this past weekend which at the time of reporting yielded 54 Nurse Military Spouses responses. 98% of the respondents indicated they would be more likely to practice in a Guam Civilian facility if Guam was a member of the NLC. Of the 54 respondents, 23 or (42%) of the respondents currently hold a Multistate License.

GBNE also sent a separate survey out to all 1,456 Guam licensed nurses this past weekend. As of 72 hours after launching the survey, 510 licensees (or 35% of the total licensees) had responded. Residency breakdown was as follows: 83% Guam residents and 17% non-residents of Guam. A total of 498 or 98% of the respondents indicated support in joining NLC. During the public hearing for Bill 239-35 held in September 2020, there was overwhelming support given by testimony of nursing leaders throughout the

island. Based on the recent survey and the previous hearing for NLC, joining the Nurse Licensure Compact is something Guam's nurses want to move forward with.

Guam's experience with the COVID-19 pandemic underscores the advantage Guam would have had if it was under the compact. If Guam became a member of the NLC today, travel nurses with multi-state licenses could immediately begin working on Guam. This would remove the administrative burden to HPLO staff needing to process emergency temporary work permits under the Emergency Declaration. To reiterate, these nurses will have already met all of Guam's mandatory licensure requirements and Guam would have the assurance that background checks have been completed. This is precious time that is saved especially during a pandemic.

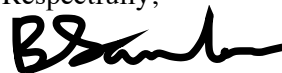
Being part of the NLC could entice more nursing instructors to teach online courses for our growing pool of Guam nurses seeking graduate and doctoral studies. I personally know of at least 10 nurses who have obtained their master's in nursing or a doctoral degree within the past two years. As you may or may not know, these programs are not available on Guam. Our Guam nurses want and deserve these opportunities for higher education and NLC helps with that.

The NLC brings the ability of nurses from other jurisdictions to provide care to patients via telehealth. Some examples of nursing care include telephone triage, nursing supportive care for patients with diabetes, congestive heart failures, COPD, the list goes on. Telehealth communications interactions by phone, video conferencing or secured messaging have widely been adopted by healthcare facilities and supported by Medicare due to the pandemic. The nurses providing care from thousands of miles away must possess a privilege to practice on Guam because nursing care is being delivered to a patient who is physically on Guam.

When Guam becomes a part of the NLC, Nurses still have the option for applying and renewing their Guam licenses as a single state license. In fact, if NLC is passed on Guam, GBNE initially anticipates partial implementation in that aforementioned ORBS system will need to be put into place with the help of NCSBN and NLC before Guam can start issuing any multistate licenses to Guam's Nurses. Guam will however will instantaneously benefit upon enactment of NLC in that current holders of multi-state licenses would be able to start practicing in Guam immediately.

Pursuing membership to NLC is a great undertaking, however, we must not let fear of change prevent us from moving forward. I believe it is achievable with the support of NCSBN and NLC. We need to shift our thinking and recognize that the NLC must be viewed as one approach to addressing the nursing shortage in Guam. This is a great recruitment strategy. Many in the community believe that Guam must simultaneously initiate strategies for retention of nurses, such as addressing nursing salaries. The timing for both of these to occur is now. The time for modernization of GBNE is now. Please do the right thing and support Bill 13-36. Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Bernadette Santos", written in a cursive style.

Bernadette Santos, MPA, BSN, RN

Testimony of Zennia Cruz Pecina, MSN, RN
Health Professional Licensing Office, Administrator
Guam Board of Nurse Examiners, Executive Director

Committee on General Government Operations, Appropriations and Housing
February 3, 2021
36th Guam Legislature

Public Hearing on Bill No. 13-36

AN ACT TO ADD A NEW ARTICLE: 3A TO PART 1 OF CHAPTER 12, DIVISION 1, TITLE 10, GUAM CODE
ANNOTATED, RELATIVE TO ADOPTING THE NURSE LICENSURE COMPACT

Sponsors: Senator Mary Camacho Torres, Senator Tina Rose Muna Barnes, Senator Amanda L. Shelton

Hafa Adai Senators of the 36th Guam Legislature. My name is Zennia Cruz Pecina, MSN, RN, Administrator for the Health Professional Licensure Office, EMS Administrator and Executive Director for the Guam Board of Nurse Examiners.

Thank you for this opportunity to present my written testimony in favor of implementing the Nurse Licensure Compact on Guam.

This Public Hearing is exciting for me and many of our nurses on Guam. There are 34 out of 50 states that are members of the Nurse Licensure Compact (NLC), and due to the COVID – 19 outbreak, several other states plan to propose legislation in the coming months. To date, Washington State and Oregon are states pending legislation. When passed, both will be the first in the West Coast to do so. Senators, here we are with our NLC bill up for legislation...with your support, Guam will be the first Territory that would open the doors for specialty nurses and make available Telehealth and online nursing education possible in this remote part of the world. As you hear testimonies about the NLC, I employ you, Senators to weigh in the benefits that the NLC offers and what that will mean for our Island, our Island with limited resources because of our geographical location. The Pandemic has proven the dire need for specialty nurses, Telehealth and online nursing education. A huge benefit for our Island of Guam.

This Public Hearing is a long awaited journey. Before you is a bill that that will enable nurses to practice in person or virtually by way of Telehealth and provide needed care to patients across the ocean without having to obtain multiple licenses. This bill would also allow nurses from 34 states who employ over 2 million nurses to assist Guam in the event of an emergency and vice versa. The NLC has been operational for 15 years and has proven to be safe and efficient.

You will hear the testimony of many of our nurses in support of the NLC. And rightfully so because it is the right thing to do. For years we have been struggling with the shortage of nurses. Thank the Lord for the greatness of our University of Guam, School of Nursing that produces nurses consistently for our Island. But that is not enough to alleviate the shortage of experienced, seasoned and specialized nurses. That is where we fall short of providing nursing services. WE LACK Specialty nurses to assist in specialized areas of the hospital....the intensive care unit, the emergency room and operating room. Adoption of the NLC is one vehicle that will promote recruitment of nurses to our Island. The care of our people during the pandemic was dependent on the hiring of travel nurses. A temporary measure with a

huge price tag attached to it. The pandemic has proven that we can bring the necessary specialty nurses that our Island lacks. But let's be smart and frugal with our monies and allow nurses with multistate licenses to be recruited locally so there is no disparity in pay amongst our Island nurses.

As the Administrator of the Health Professional Licensing Office (HPLO), I wanted to shift gears and share two things: 1. an update of the medical Compact Licensure and 2. And a timeline of our journey to obtain NLC.

First, the Guam Board of Medical Examiners adopted the Medical Compact that was passed into law in 2018 with full implementation in 2019. To date, the Island gained 34 physicians as a result of the compact. This is amazing as we know how difficult it can be to recruit physicians.

Secondly, I wanted to share a timeline of our quest for NLC:

- February 2018 – The NLC was first introduced to Guam Nurses by my predecessor and the Guam Board of Nurse Examiners. A conference was held, providing a round table discussion with key stakeholders. Presenters from the National Council of State Boards of Nursing (NCSBN) funded the conference and a presentation provided by three members of the council.
- June 2018 – A second meeting was held on Guam in June of 2018 to meet with key stakeholders. I do not have any record of the output or disposition of the NLC at that time.
- April 2019 – In April of 2019, the idea of resurrecting the quest for NLC was discussed by the Guam Board of Nursing. In collaboration with our national partners, a second conference was offered.
- May 2019 – In May of 2019, the NCSBN sent representatives to Guam and provided a two day conference attended by Guam Nurses, Nursing Leaders, Hospital Administrators, Government Officials, Senators and our newly elected Governor. The conference provided information about the NLC and its impact to Guam and the nursing workforce. It afforded our nursing community an opportunity for questions and answers. And most importantly a chance to receive feedback from key stakeholders. At the end of the day, we had an overwhelming support for NLC from our Island Nurses, with the request to get going with our pursuit for NLC.....and so the journey begun.
- June/July/August 2019 – Guam was chosen as a recipient by the NCSBN to receive the Optimal Board Regulatory System (ORBS). The ORBS is a turnkey solution for independent NCSBN members in the US and Guam will be the first Territory to avail to this system. The system will assist the HPLO with license management and discipline enforcement across the lifespan of a nurse. Guam currently utilizes NURSYS, a comprehensive electronic information system that collects and stores a nurse's personal information, licensing information, discipline information and license verifications. The ORBS is the ultimate upgrade of that system that cost close to \$250,000. The first phase of the project was funded by NCSBN. Three contract individuals were hired to input our current paper filing system of active and inactive nurses into a data base in preparation for ORBS which was completed in 2020. The second phase of the project is the integration of Nursys to ORBS.
- September 2019 – Attended an NLC conference to gain information about the NLC and its guidelines for implementation.
- October 2019 – Educational Sessions with the community and key stake holders

- October 2019 – Senator Mary Torres agreed to sponsor the NLC Bill with Speaker Tina Muna Barnes as co-sponsor
- November 2019 – Continued educational sessions with key stakeholders
- November 2019 – Draft Bill for Guam NLC
- December 2019 – Bill No. 239-35 sent to Committee on Health pending date for public hearing.
- January 20, 2020 – Public Hearing scheduled for Bill No. 239-35
- January 2020 – Public Hearing cancelled due to holiday.
- September 2020 – 11 months later and a public hearing was re-scheduled for September 30, 2020
- Hearing: **1:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m.**
 - **Bill No. 239-35 (COR)** - Mary Camacho Torres / Tina Rose Muña Barnes; “Act to add a New Article 3A to Chapter 12 of Title 10 Guam Code Annotated, relative to Adopting the Nurse Licensure Compact; and to add a new Subsection D to Section 12307 of Chapter 12 of Title 10 Guam Code Annotated, relative to Establishing Additional Duties of the Guam Board of Nurse Examiners to facilitate the licensure of Nurses under the Compact.”
 - **3:30 p.m. to 5:30 p.m.** - **ROUNDTABLE DISCUSSION** on Impediments to the recruitment of temporary, emergency, foreign, and off-island nurses to meet Guam’s Nursing Needs, pre and post Covid-19
 - **6:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m.** – **SECOND HEARING on Bill No. 239-35 (COR)**
- Bill No. 239-35 - Despite the overwhelming support of the bill by nursing experts, the bill was not introduced into session for voting.
- January 2021 – The Guam Board of Nurse Examiners regrouped and sent out a survey monkey to all nurses licensed on Guam. Over a 1000 emails were sent. The questions and results of the survey as of February 3, 2021:
 - Are you a resident of Guam?
 - 82.18% Yes 510 Respondents
 - 17.84% No
 - Do you support joining the Nurse Licensure Compact?
 - 97.84% Yes 509 Respondents (1 skipped)
 - 2.16% No
- January 2021 – Bill No. 13-36 introduced by Senator Torres, Senator Muna and Senator Shelton is scheduled for a Public Hearing on February 3, 2021
- February 3, 2021 – Bill No. 13-36 will be heard by the public on February 3, 2021
- Next Steps, upon enactment of the NLC on Guam:
 - Nurses with a multistate license will immediately be able to travel and work on Guam
 - The implementation of the ORBS system will take up to a year
 - Guam will not be able to provide multistate license pending implementation of ORBS
 - This will be an opportunity for Guam to work on concerns regarding nursing salaries on Guam
 - GBNE to establish an upgrade fee for multistate licensure

The Guam Board of Nurse Examiners is grateful for the introduction of Bill No. 13-36. And we are hopeful that this time around, the voices of our experts will be heard.

The current opposition claims the NLC will dilute our nursing talent pool but in actuality, the NLC will benefit our patients and health care system, as we will be better able to attract talented nurses from other health care systems who could introduce better, evidence based practice or efficiencies in nursing care. Another opposition is lost revenues. An updated financial impact resulted in the following.

- Revenue Loss: There are 183 nurses in the mainland who hold a Guam license but are not residence of Guam. If they continue to renew at \$80.00 every two years, the loss would amount to \$14,640.00.
- Revenue Gain: There are 84 nurses in the mainland who hold a Guam license and are residence of Guam and 50 nurses who currently work in a Compact State who hold a single Guam license. A total of 134 nurses who would have to avail to Guam's compact fees at \$100.00 every two years, resulting in a gain of \$13,400.
- Anticipated Revenue Loss of \$14,640.00 and Revenue Gain of \$13,400. There is no significant revenue loss assuming that the above license holders renew or apply for multistate licensure.

It is quite evident by the overwhelming support of respondents from the survey monkey that Guam Nurses want the Nurse Licensure Compact. The survey resulted in 97.84% in support of the NLC. It is unfortunate that our voices were not heard last year, 2020 but Senators, you can change that this year, 2021. Let the voices of the experts who know what is best for the Island of Guam be heard. When it comes to our profession, I say, let the experts make the decision. With your support, we can do what is right for our Island. And the right thing to do is to give the Nurse Licensure Compact a chance to be the vehicle to attract what Guam needs, strong, experience, seasoned nurses to help care for our people of Guam.

Sincerely,

Zennia Cruz Pecina, MSN, RN

February 2, 2021

Chairman Joe S. San Agustin
Committee on General Government Operations, Appropriations, Housing
163 Chalan Santo Papa Juan Pablo Dos,
Hagatna, Guam 96910

Dear Chairman San Agustin and Committee members,

On behalf of the National Council of State Boards of Nursing (“NCSBN”), I am writing to voice my support for bill 13-36 (COR), which authorizes Guam to join 34 states in enacting the Nurse Licensure Compact (“NLC”). The NLC allows registered nurses and licensed practical nurses to have one multistate license in their primary state of residence and practice in other compact states under that one license. The NLC is a vital tool in the fight against COVID-19.

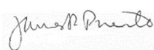
The NLC allows nurses to immediately cross borders and provide vital services to fill gaps in care. This is a vital tool to help alleviate the nursing shortage in Guam as well as in times of a disaster, like COVID-19, when healthcare staffing is strained due to increased patient volume and loss of healthcare workers from the spread of illness. During the COVID-19 pandemic, nurses in NLC participating states were able to immediately cross state lines and treat patients. This mobile nurse workforce is vital to cover gaps in care, both during the pandemic and beyond.

There has been some concern voiced in Guam about the potential out-migration of nurses if the NLC is adopted. The NLC has been operating for over 20 years and no state has ever repealed the NLC. In fact, the NLC has only continued to grow in state participants. If compact states were experiencing a large exodus of nurses, then they would have left the NLC long ago.

Guam can bring needed relief to its hospitals, nurses and patients by enacting the NLC. Once Guam passes the NLC, nurses from compact states can start practicing in Guam without delay, even though Guam may not be able to issue compact licenses to Guam nurses yet.

The NLC increases access to health care, protects patient safety and is a crucial tool to address nursing shortages. Thank you for taking the time to address this important piece of legislation.

Best,



Jim Puente
Director, Nurse Licensure Compact

Honorable Senators,

I want to thank you for the opportunity to testify in favor of Bill 13-36. My name is Dr. Kevin Hitosis. I am a nurse practitioner with the Department of Veteran Affairs and the Vice-Chair for the Guam Board of Nurse Examiners. I have had the privilege of serving the public on the Guam nursing board for the past ten years. Ensuring patient safety and the public's protection through nursing practice regulation is the board's mission. It is this mission and duty that I take on with the utmost importance. It is why I am in favor of the Nurse Licensure Compact (NLC). The NLC is not just about raising greater mobility and access to nursing care for our island. It is also about ensuring the safety of the public through licensing and discipline enforcement.

The COVID-19 pandemic has had an overwhelming effect on our healthcare delivery system. But it has taught us that accessible nursing care has to be fluid and dynamic across state boundaries. It was not the case for our island. Guam has needed to mobilize nursing personnel to staff areas of hospital shortage in the ICU and emergency departments and medical-surgical floors. As a result of the emergency declaration, the governor called the nurses to assist in the pandemic crisis. Although the nurses stepped up to the challenge, they worked in unfamiliar settings.

In some cases, there was a mismatch between skill and area of need. As a result, school nurses were mandated to work in the hospital. Military nurses were also called to assist at our public hospital, requiring time and costs for licenses to be processed through the board. Further, highly paid travel nurses were also hired to fill the inpatient needs. If Guam adopted the NLC, nurses from a compact state would meet the uniform licensure requirement and these experienced nurses would serve the needs of specialty care in the hospital.

The adoption of the NLC allows for help with the nursing shortage in Guam with experienced nurses from other states. The Nurse Licensure Compact is an agreement with other states permitting a nurse to have one license but having the ability to practice in other states, which are part of the compact. This eliminates the burdensome, costly, and time-consuming process of obtaining single state licenses in each state of practice. Thirty-four member states are currently part of the NLC and that represents a pool of 2 million registered nurses who may be a resource for Guam. Under the NLC, nurses are allowed to cross state borders in times of emergency need rapidly. Telehealth nursing would be permitted across the country without the additional need for licenses.

Not everyone qualifies for a multi-state license. An applicant must hold an active, unencumbered license and submit to state and federal fingerprint-based criminal background checks. Furthermore, the nurse must not have been convicted or found guilty, has no misdemeanor convictions related to nursing practice, and is not currently a participant in an alternative program.

Our Guam students would not be limited in online nursing education. The Institute of Medicine Future of Nursing Report recommended that nurses achieve higher levels of education and training through an improved educational system that promotes seamless academic progression. Distance education courses provide nurses tremendous opportunities by offering access to quality nursing education in small communities or rural areas where nursing programs do not exist. They also allow flexibility for those students who otherwise could not attend a nursing program. Through the NLC, online nursing education affords our population and students the opportunities for higher degrees and advancement in different specialties.

Adopting the NLC presents an opportunity to modernize the Guam Board of Nursing with a state of the art system in license management and discipline enforcement. Called the Optimal Regulatory Board System (ORBS), it is a confidential and secure cloud-based system that will allow the Guam nursing board to run with a leading-edge system. It provides modules for licensing, discipline, and education program management functions while efficiently reducing member boards' operational processes. The ORBS digitizes paper processes, is no cost to member boards to use, and requires no system maintenance cost. Purchasing the software would typically cost well over a hundred thousand dollars; It would be available to Guam through a grant from the NLC. Just imagine that our nurses can apply and renew their licenses online.

The Nurse Licensure Compact and ORBS makes sense for the needs of our island. A nurse with a multi-state license can easily and quickly respond to needs in times of crisis. The compact reduces complexity, reduces cost, and provides an even higher level of public protection. I hope you will vote in favor of this bill. Thank you!



OFFICE OF THE ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF DEFENSE
1500 DEFENSE PENTAGON
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20301-1500

MANPOWER AND
RESERVE AFFAIRS

January 27, 2021

The Honorable Senator Joe S. San Agustin
Chair, Committee on General Government Operations, Appropriations and Housing
163 Chalan Santo Papa
Hagåtña, Guam 96910

SUBJ: Bill No. 13-36 (COR) – Nurse Licensure Compact

Chair San Agustin and Members of the Committee:

On behalf of military families and the Department of Defense (DoD), I am writing to express support for the policy addressed within Bill 13-36 (COR). This bill seeks to enact the Nurse Licensure Compact (NLC) on Guam, by which the Guam Board of Nurse Examiners would be authorized to issue multistate licenses to qualified nurses on Guam, allowing them to practice in other NLC states, and would allow nurses possessing multistate licenses issued by other NLC states to practice on Guam without having to obtain additional licenses.

Licensure issues for both our transitioning military members and their spouses have been a priority for the Department for several years. Sixty-eight percent of married service members reported that their spouse's ability to maintain a career impacts their decision to remain in the military and eighty-eight percent of military spouses report they want or need to work. As our military members and their families move from state to state, the ability for them to quickly gain employment and progress on their chosen career paths is very important.

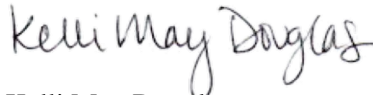
Our office is working to assist states in approving eight occupational licensure compacts, to include the NLC. These occupational licensure compacts provide consistent rules that allow licensed members to work in other states through "privilege to practice" policies or to more easily transfer their license to a new state. Additionally, the current coronavirus pandemic demonstrates that interstate licensure compacts can provide a permanent solution to leverage underutilized medical talent to meet labor shortages in high-need areas, such as nursing. Thirty-four states have already enacted this legislation.

The NLC allows a nurse to have one multistate license in the primary jurisdiction of residence and to practice in other compact states, while subject to each jurisdiction's practice laws. Specific benefits of the NLC include:

- Enabling nurses to practice in person or provide telehealth nursing services to patients located across the country without having to obtain additional licenses.
- Allowing nurses to quickly cross state borders and provide vital services in the event of a disaster.
- Facilitating telenursing and online nursing education.
- Cost effectiveness:
 - Nurses do not have to obtain an additional nursing license(s), making practicing across state borders affordable and convenient.
 - The compact removes a burdensome expense not only for nurses, but also organizations that employ nurses and may share the expenditure of multiple licenses.

In closing, let me say that DoD is extremely grateful for Guam's ongoing commitment and efforts to support our military members and their families, especially concerning career portability. We appreciate the opportunity to support the policy reflected in Bill 13-36 (COR). Please feel free to contact me with any questions you might have.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Kelli May Douglas".

Kelli May Douglas
Southwest Regional Liaison
Defense-State Liaison Office
ODASD, Military Community & Family Policy
571-265-0075

cc:

Senator Mary Camacho Torres
Senator Tina Rose Muña Barnes
Senator Amanda L. Shelton