

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-5301

June 2, 2023

Honorable Tina Rose Muna-Barnes
Vice Speaker, 37th Guam Legislature
134 West Soledad Avenue
Hagatna, Guam 96910

Re: Recovery Aid Assistance- COFA Migrants on Guam

Dear Vice Speaker Muna-Barnes;

This is to acknowledge receipt of your letter which our office received the afternoon of June 1, 2023, where you expressed your concerns with Recovery Aid Assistance for COFA Migrants residing in Guam. We certainly mirror that concern, as Super Typhoon Mawar certainly did not segregate the immigration status of an island resident when it tormented Guam last week. In any case, we would like to provide you some updates on this issue, which our office has been pursuing:

- Prior to the storm, and during one of our briefings, we were informed by federal partners that the issue with COFA migrants not qualifying for Recovery Aid would surface in the event Typhoon Mawar was to leave behind a national emergency declaration, hence, to prepare for options to ensure they are not left behind.
- During our meeting yesterday morning with Assistant Secretary Carmen Cantor of the Department of Interior, we requested their support in our letter to President Joe Biden to consider waiving this provision to ensure that COFA migrants are not left behind in receiving recovery aid. This process would be the swiftest approach to address the immediate concerns on the table. No direct response was provided at the time.
- Your letter requests the consideration of amending federal statute, which is a possibility, but it is also a lengthy process with several moving parts. H.R. 1571, introduced by Representative Ed Case (Hawaii), and which we also co-sponsored, would address these inequities for COFA migrants and federal programs on a permanent basis. However, this legislation is part of a larger discussion with COFA negotiations, and thus will be entertained once those treaties are submitted to Congress later this year.

The issue for COFA migrants receiving Recovery Aid needs to be treated as an urgent situation, hence our office is submitting a letter to President Biden to request his consideration for the waiver of the provisions through an executive order. Introducing legislation is not conducive, considering the timelines that we are dealing with. We are hopeful that the DOI will be supportive of our endeavors, since the COFA discussions, hence the support of those island residents impacted by this federal provision, are under their jurisdiction. Likewise, your efforts in sharing your concerns in a letter penned to the White House will certainly assist in this process, since it is indicative of a collective approach.

Our office will keep you posted on any developments on this issue, and likewise we do hope to be kept updated if there are any on your end. Thank you very much and let's continue the fight to ensure that our brothers and sisters from the islands who call Guam home, are not left behind in this calamity.

Respectfully;

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "James C. Moylan". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "James" being more prominent and the last name "Moylan" following in a similar style.

James C. Moylan
Member of Congress