



"Sowing the Seeds of Prosperity for a Sustainable Micronesia"

A RESOLUTION OF THE 24th MICRONESIAN ISLANDS FORUM

Concerning equitable access to quality and comprehensive healthcare services for Pacific Island Veterans of the U. S. Armed Forces and their families.

WHEREAS, the U. S.-Affiliated Pacific Islands (U. S.APIs) including Guam, the Commonwealth of Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI), the Republic of the Marshall Islands (RMI), the Republic of Palau, the Federated States of Micronesia (FSM), and its states - Pohnpei, Chuuk, Yap, and Kosrae, and the Micronesia Islands Forum (MIF), and American Samoa, includes the Regional Health Committee (RHC) within the Micronesia Islands Forum (MIF) and is comprised of the Ministers, Secretaries and Directors of Health of the six U. S.APIs, who are also the governing body of the Pacific Islands Health Officers Association (PIHOA), which serves as the Secretariat of the MIF Regional Health Committee (RHC); and

WHEREAS, PIHOA's mission is to improve the health and well-being of communities in the U. S. APIs by providing, through consensus, a unified credible voice on health issues of regional importance; and

WHEREAS, the U. S. APIs are home to more than 500,000 people, who live on hundreds of islands and atolls spanning millions of square miles of ocean and crossing five Pacific time zones, an area significantly larger than the continental United States; and

WHEREAS, the U. S. API populations are geographically dispersed and have resource-limited health systems impacting their ability to provide comprehensive and effective health services across an array of specialty clinical, public health and ancillary disciplines. Critical resource limitations include, but are not limited to: lack of trained and qualified health staff in specialty clinical, public health and ancillary service disciplines, insufficient financial and other resources to recruit and retain these qualified health staff, and inadequate/insufficient infrastructure to



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Lourdes Leon Guerrero
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President, Rep. of Palau



David W. Panuelo
President, FSM



Hilda C. Heine
President, RMI



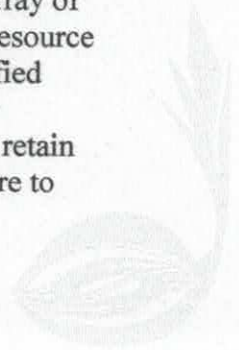
Marcelo K. Peterson
Governor, Pohnpei State



Henry Falan
Governor, State of Yap



Carson K. Sigrah
Governor, State of Kosrae





ensure adequate access to quality and comprehensive services to highly dispersed, rural populations and those with specialty healthcare needs (e.g. veteran's healthcare needs); and

WHEREAS, the citizens of the three Freely Associated States (FAS) of the FSM, RMI, and the Republic of Palau, under their respective Compacts of Free Association with the U. S., are eligible to be recruited and enter into service in the U. S. armed forces; and

WHEREAS, upon honorable discharge from the U.S. armed forces, FAS citizens residing in the U. S. are not eligible for full package of U. S. VA benefits, nor are they able to access VA services in their respective home islands, unless they travel to the U. S. territories or the U. S. mainland to access these services; and

WHEREAS, in order for FAS citizens residing in the FAS to access VA services in Guam, the CNMI, Hawaii and the U. S mainland, they are required to pay travel expenses, out-of-pocket, for those who are on medical retirement, in order to maintain their VA benefit eligibility, while residing in the FAS, and they need to access these services within specific time periods in any given year outside of the FAS, thereby causing a significant financial hardship for many; and

WHEREAS, the U. S. VA designates the three FAS as "foreign soil", thereby categorized as ineligible sites for VA clinics and other associated VA services; and

WHEREAS, U. S. API healthcare systems are limited in their scope and capacities to provide needed specialty services for returning veterans and support to their respective family members, especially mental health services to treat and manage Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and specialty rehabilitation services, causing significant impacts to Pacific Veterans as evidenced by high suicide rates and other poor health outcomes amongst Pacific Veterans,

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that the Leaders endorse, in principle, and as a matter of priority, the need to address equitable access to quality and comprehensive healthcare services for Pacific Veterans and their families residing in the U. S. APIs and the U. S. who have served honorably, irrespective of citizenship; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, the Leaders endorse a request to the U. S. government and its relevant agencies to fund and conduct a definitive, full-scale assessment/study of Pacific Veterans' issues and needs, to include data collection on the total number of Pacific Veterans residing in the U. S. APIs and the U. S., and disclosure of U. S.



Department of Defense (DoD) and VA records of registered Pacific island veterans; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Leaders will support executive and legislative efforts with the U. S. government and its authorized agencies to fund and conduct a full-scale legal review of all relevant U. S. laws and legislation, including Compact language, impacting Pacific Veteran eligibility to VA benefits and access to services; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Leaders request that such reports also put forward recommendations for mechanisms to deliver healthcare services to Pacific Veterans and their families residing in the U. S. APIs, particularly in the three FAS; and put forward recommendations to strengthen local healthcare systems and capacities to better serve Pacific Veterans with special health needs and their families across all the U. S. APIs, including but not limited to, targeted funding and training of local healthcare providers; and


BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Leaders further task its Secretariat to disseminate this resolution to the U. S. API health departments/ministries, the U. S. Congress House Committee on Energy and Commerce, the U. S. Department of Defense, the U. S. Department of Veterans Affairs, the U. S. State Department and associated U. S. Embassies in the three FASs; and


BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, the Leaders task the MIF Secretariat to report back to the respective U. S. API health departments and leadership and PIHOA, at the next MIF, on the status of the U. S. response to this resolution from the identified U. S. government agencies.


Signed this 11th Day of July, 2019 at the 24th Micronesia Islands' Forum in Chuuk, Federated States of Micronesia.




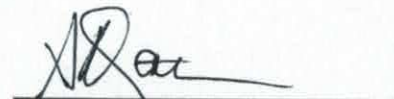



RALPH DLG. TORRES
Governor
Commonwealth of the
Northern Mariana Islands

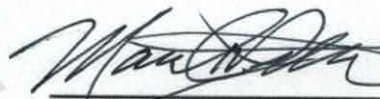

LOU LEON GUERERRO
Governor
U. S. Territory of Guam



TOMMY E. REMENGESAU, JR.
President
Republic of Palau



DAVID W. PANUELO
President
Federated States of Micronesia


AMENTA MATTHEW
Minister of Cultural and Internal
Affairs
For President Hilda Heine Ed. D.
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JOHN ONELIMO
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