

INTRODUCTION OF THE NORTHERN MARIANA ISLANDS MEDICAID EQUIVALENCE ACT

HON. GREGORIO KILILI CAMACHO SABLÁN

OF THE NORTHERN MARIANA ISLANDS
IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, May 11, 2023

Mr. SABLÁN. Mr. Speaker, Medicaid funding for the Marianas was \$6.5 million when I first came to Congress in 2009. This year, the Medicaid block grant is \$66 million. We have made significant progress.

But the Marianas is like the runner who begins the race 400 yards back from everyone else's starting line.

In 1983, when limited Medicaid block grants for the territories were established in law, the Marianas lacked congressional representation. The impact was evident: our grant was the smallest.

In subsequent years, though the grant increased with the percentage of inflation or congressional action, that built-in disparity between the Marianas and other territories was perpetuated.

The result is today American Samoa receives \$24 million more in Medicaid funding than the Marianas despite having the same population and income. And American Samoa is able to offer more healthcare services to more low-income residents as a result. In 2021, the American Samoa Medicaid program served nearly 38,000 residents whereas the Marianas Medicaid program served 17,000.

The time has come to level up and provide funding for the Marianas equivalent to a territory with virtually the same population and incomes.

The legislation I am introducing today does just that. It provides for a Marianas Medicaid grant that matches what American Samoa receives and corrects a historical disparity in Medicaid funding that began when the Marianas had no voice in Congress.

This legislation is not simply an action to rationalize the funding for Medicaid. The legislation also is a response to the very real shortfall in Medicaid funding for the Marianas that our Governor Arnold I. Palacios reported to me in April. I am including his letter in the RECORD.

Funding for fiscal 2023 has already been allotted. So, today's legislation will not aid this year's shortfall. But today's legislation will help ensure that in future years, low-income residents in the Marianas and American Samoa have equivalent access to federally funded healthcare.

COMMONWEALTH OF THE NORTHERN MARIANAS ISLANDS, OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR,

Saipan, MP, April 4, 2023.

Re Financial Shortfall.

Hon. ARNOLD I. PALACIOS & Lt. Governor DAVID M. APATANG,
Governor, Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, Saipan, MP.

DEAR GOVERNOR PALACIOS & LT. GOVERNOR APATANG: In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, and through temporary authorities provided during the National Public Health Emergency (PHE), the Commonwealth Medicaid Agency (CMA) expanded coverage for

up to 30,000 additional CNMI residents, providing vital healthcare access to over 45,000 individuals today. The PHE concludes on May 11, 2023, and although Medicaid expenses will gradually decrease, we still anticipate a financial shortfall by the end of fiscal year 2023 due to the impact of the PHE.

The CNMI's federal Medicaid funding is capped annually by statute, in section 1108 of the Social Security Act. The CNMI Government bears the responsibility for services to Medicaid beneficiaries when federal funds are exhausted. Despite permanent increases to CNMI's Medicaid cap through the Further Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2020, our current funding of \$65,870,000 for fiscal year 2023 is insufficient given the expenditure trends observed in fiscal year 2022 and as of March 30, 2023.

Medicaid expended approximately \$18 million of ARPA funds appropriated by the CNMI Government in addition to the \$63 million of the 1108 Funding for Fiscal Year 2022. As a result of the additional appropriations, CNMI Medicaid did not experience a shortfall. As of March 30, 2023, Medicaid has expended 61% of its Fiscal Year 2023 section 1108 allotment. No other funding sources are available today to supplement the shortfall.

The CNMI Medicaid's Section 1108 funding is expected to be depleted before the current fiscal year's end, which threatens our ability to continue providing essential healthcare services to Medicaid beneficiaries. Additional funding is crucial to prevent provider closures, suspension of services and loss of healthcare access for beneficiaries, and increased burden on the Commonwealth Healthcare Corporation (CHCC), which will become the sole provider available to Medicaid beneficiaries when federal funds run out. Moreover, the CNMI's existing shortage of specialty care services will be exacerbated, compromising current and future patients' access to off-island treatments.

We initially projected a \$10 million shortfall in Section 1108 funding; this projection has since been revised to \$4.8 million as of March 30, 2023, following the announcement of a date certain for the PHE's conclusion and additional guidance from the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS). However, this figure may change due to monthly uncertainties in services rendered and accounts receivables. It may also change if monthly payments made to CHCC are adjusted based on any revisions made to the Certified Public Expenditure methodology post-PHE.

While the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2023 has permanently secured CNMI's Federal Medical Assistance Percentage (FMAP) at 83%, the 6.2% increase provided by the Families First Coronavirus Response Act will be phased out, resulting in higher local shares for CNMI. Additionally, as we have learned from your FY 2023 revised budget message transmitted to the Legislature on March 8, 2023, Community Disaster Loan funds are no longer available to support the CNMI's local match requirement for Medicaid. Insufficient local matching funds jeopardizes our ability to utilize federal funds.

To avoid the fast-approaching fiscal cliff and the healthcare crisis that will follow, the Commonwealth's Medicaid program is in urgent need of two critical interventions in the current fiscal year:

- 1) a waiver of the local match requirement; and
- 2) additional federal funding of at least \$4.8 million, based on current projections.

These measures are essential to address our outstanding and anticipated obligations for the remainder of the fiscal year and will

ensure the continued provision of vital healthcare services to our constituents.

Please feel free to contact me for further discussion.

Sincerely,

VICENTA BORJA,
Acting Medicaid Director.

RECOGNIZING HEREDITARY ANGIOEDEMA AWARENESS DAY

HON. GERALD E. CONNOLLY

OF VIRGINIA
IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, May 11, 2023

Mr. CONNOLLY. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize May 16th as Hereditary Angioedema Awareness Day and to call attention to challenges and opportunities faced by this patient community. Angioedema (HAE) is a rare, severe, and potentially life-threatening genetic condition in about 1 in 10,000 to 1 in 50,000 people. HAE symptoms include painful and disabling episodes of edema, or swelling, in all body parts including the abdomen. Throat swelling can close the airway and cause death by asphyxiation. While minor trauma or stress may trigger an attack, swelling often occurs without a known trigger. Symptoms of hereditary angioedema typically begin in childhood and worsen during puberty. Untreated individuals may have an attack every 1 to 2 weeks with most episodes lasting 3 to 4 days.

HAE used to be associated with an incredibly high mortality rate, but recent breakthroughs in medical science have taken the condition from a death sentence to a manageable chronic illness. With the advent of innovative therapies, HAE patients no longer experience disability and dependency, but rather live full, productive, and largely suffering-free lives. HAE affected individuals require near constant access to life-saving care and medication and additional research advancements are needed to sustain progress toward an elusive cure.

Loss of productivity at work and school is one of the many side effects of those suffering from HAE, particularly when it is not managed correctly and comprehensively. In an earlier survey conducted by the U.S. Hereditary Angioedema Association, 57 percent of patients reported as not having equal advancement in career pathways and 48 percent stated they did not achieve the educational level that they wanted.

With significant improvements in care and outcomes, HAE patients now sometimes face arbitrary barriers to accessing care and therapies. Some of these barriers are related to a lack of information and awareness about rare disease experiences in general. Other barriers are related to problematic coverage policies, such as fail first protocols, access to copayment and charitable assistance, and prior authorization requirements. I look forward to working with my colleagues to continue to improve coverage and access and lowering out-of-pocket costs for patients with rare and chronic illnesses.

I call on my colleagues to continue to support efforts to advance medical research, improve coverage and access, enhance patient care, and join me in recognizing May 16th as Hereditary Angioedema Awareness Day.

HONORING HILTON ETIENNE

HON. FREDERICA S. WILSON

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, May 11, 2023

Ms. WILSON of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I rise to honor the service of Hilton Etienne, my intern who has completed his Spring 2023 semester serving the people of Florida's 24th Congressional District. Hilton has proven to be a very articulate young man and shows great promise for his future endeavors. Hilton has assisted my office in various areas, such as education policy, constituent outreach, and research. He has demonstrated an excellent drive and a continuous willingness to learn.

Hilton Etienne is a proud first generation Haitian American from Pompano Beach, FL. He is a current student at the University of Florida majoring in Economics. While at the University of Florida, he has orchestrated college prep workshops for underrepresented high school students to obtain access to higher education through the Bridges Multicultural Outreach Program and has spent the last year serving as the elected secretary of the Black Student Union. His experience in Student Government and the Black Student Union has empowered him to pursue a career around helping students achieve their dreams.

Upon transitioning from his internship, Hilton will start a fellowship with the PPIA Junior Summer Institute at Princeton University. While there, he will spend 6 weeks taking graduate level coursework in Economics, Public Policy, and Foreign Relations to be well equipped to pursue a master's in public policy upon obtaining his bachelor's.

On behalf of Florida's 24th Congressional District, I ask my colleagues to join me in honoring Hilton Etienne for his present and future accomplishments.

RECOGNIZING ROBERT C.
FREEMAN, ESQ.

HON. BRIAN HIGGINS

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, May 11, 2023

Mr. HIGGINS of New York. Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to recognize and congratulate Robert Freeman on receiving the 30 Under 30 award presented by Forbes to individuals who have impactful careers and accomplishments in their industry.

Mr. Freeman started his education at the State University of New York at Buffalo, where he graduated with a Bachelor of Arts, and continued his education there earning a Juris Doctor from the University at Buffalo's School of Law. During his time at the University at Buffalo, Mr. Freeman was a member of the Phi Alpha Theta History Honor Society, and a recipient of the Milton Plesur History Honor Award.

Mr. Freeman is a partner at Nesper, Ferber, DiGiacomo, Johnson & Grimm, LLP, where he has been since Oct. 2019. There, he focuses his practice on commercial and residential real estate law. Some of his previous work experi-

ence includes internships with the New York State Supreme Court, 8th Judicial District, and the Erie County District Attorney's Office.

Outside of work, Mr. Freeman is actively involved with Saints Peter and Paul's Chapter of The Society of St. Vincent de Paul and is an on-ice volunteer with the SABAH program. Also, he is a member of the UB Law Alumni Association and sits on the Town of Amherst's Employee Suggestion Merit Award Board. He is a proud recipient of the Father Nelson Baker Service Award and is an Eagle Scout.

Today, I ask that we recognize and give thanks to leaders in the Western New York Community, such as Robert Freeman for his continued dedication and selfless service to his community.

CONGRATULATING THE DEPOSITORY TRUST & CLEARING CORPORATION ON ITS 50TH ANNIVERSARY

HON. KATHY CASTOR

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, May 11, 2023

Ms. CASTOR of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to acknowledge The Depository Trust & Clearing Corporation (DTCC), the world's leading post-trade market infrastructure for the global financial services industry, on its 50th anniversary. DTCC is a trusted employer in the Tampa Bay area and across the globe. An accomplishment that few firms ever achieve, this is a truly significant milestone not just for DTCC, but the industry as a whole.

Originally founded in 1973 as The Depository Trust Company (DTC), this firm was established to address a multitude of issues which had been plaguing the global financial services throughout the late 1960s and early 1970s. During this time, Wall Street dealt with countless amounts of paper every day—so much so that at one point, the U.S. markets actually stopped trading one day a week so that firms could catch up on their paperwork. This led to systems being slow, inefficient and dated, and runners having to carry paper checks and physical securities between firms.

To address this paperwork crisis, Congress charged the U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) with the task of investigating and addressing the underlying causes of the issue. The laws and solutions that resulted from this action have profoundly shaped the clearance and settlement process we use today and ultimately led to the creation of DTC as an industry utility. A true pioneer in the industry, DTC streamlined back-office operations, introduced a computerized book entry accounting system and used technology to eliminate reliance on paper stock certificates. Through its creation of the first electronic security, DTC effectively launched the modern financial services marketplace.

DTCC has had incredible growth since its foundation in 1973. Operating across 21 global locations, DTCC automates, centralizes and standardizes the processing of financial transactions. In addition to DTC, the firm has two subsidiaries, The National Securities Clearing Corporation (NSCC) and The Fixed Income

Clearing Corporation. Designated as Systemically Important Financial Market Utilities (SIFMU) by the U.S. Treasury Department's Financial Stability Oversight Council (FSOC), these three clearing agency subsidiaries play a critical role in protecting the safety and stability of the global financial system.

DTCC's accomplishments include introducing multi-lateral netting, which significantly streamlined settlement and reduced risk; automating clearing and settling trades in U.S. Treasuries and mortgage-backed securities in the world's largest fixed income market; delivering greater efficiency, cost savings and risk mitigation to institutional trading and investors; and improving the data reporting landscape for the DTC derivatives business.

I commend and am particularly grateful to DTCC for the critical role it has played in providing stability and certainty for the global financial markets in times of crisis, including the Sept. 11 terrorist attack, the 2008 Financial Crisis and the COVID-19 pandemic. In spite of these systemic shocks, DTCC ensured that the markets continued to operate seamlessly.

Over the past 50 years, DTCC has earned its reputation as a trusted steward by driving innovation, embracing technology and creating new products and services to protecting the safety and stability of the financial markets. Today, the firm continues to drive positive change by leading large-scale, industry-wide initiatives to strengthen market structure.

Mr. Speaker, on behalf of my neighbors in Tampa Bay and the citizens of Florida, I congratulate The Depository Trust & Clearing Corporation on this remarkable achievement that is its 50th anniversary and wish it many more years of success in protecting the investing public.

RECOGNIZING EAST TEXAS
NURSES

HON. NATHANIEL MORAN

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, May 11, 2023

Mr. MORAN. Mr. Speaker, in recognition of National Nurses Week, I'm proud to rise today and honor the East Texas nurses—both those who have retired and those who are still practicing, who have dutifully served our community.

For centuries, nurses have played a vital role in health care by dedicating countless hours of service to their patients and their patients' families—from providing quality care to their unparalleled sense of compassion for those in need.

During the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, these heroes selflessly put themselves at the frontline of patient care, risking their own health while battling burnout and exhaustion.

Nurses across East Texas have banded together to organize National Retired Nurses Day, in commemoration of their service and sacrifice. I am proud to support these nurses in their efforts.

On behalf of Texas's First Congressional District, I would like to thank our nurses for their relentless commitment to serving their community and dedication to helping those in need.