

STANDING COMMITTEE REPORT NO. 19-219

RE: C.R. NO. 19-351/H&SA

SUBJECT: ACCEPTING GRANT FROM THE UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES
IN THE AMOUNT OF \$1,469,247.

MARCH 31, 2017

The Honorable Wesley W. Simina
Speaker, Nineteenth Congress
Federated States of Micronesia
Eighth Special Session, 2017

Dear Mr. Speaker:

Your Committee on Health and Social Affairs to which was
referred C.R. No. 19-351, entitled:

"A RESOLUTION APPROVING AND ACCEPTING A GRANT IN THE
AMOUNT OF \$1,306,000 FROM THE UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT
OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES-CENTERS FOR DISEASE
CONTROL AND PREVENTION (CDC), TO SUPPORT AND FUND THE
FSM IMMUNIZATION AND VACCINES CHILDREN PROGRAM,
INCLUDING ALL THE TERMS AND CONDITIONS OF THE
ASSISTANCE."

begs leave to report as follows:

The intent and purpose of the resolution are expressed in
its title.

Your Committee held a hearing on March 29, 2017, the
witnesses present included the Department of Health and
Social Affairs, including the Acting Secretary and key
staff, representatives from the Office of the President,

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the Department of External Affairs, and the Department of Justice.

The program funded by this grant is well known to the Committee. This program provides targeted immunizations for our Nation's children between birth and age six. This program is active in all the four states and the primary goal is to eliminate those highly contagious childhood diseases that are preventable by vaccination.

Your Committee held in-depth discussions regarding this program after receiving the program fact sheet during the hearing. The program summary showed that only slightly more than 50% of our children are being immunized for the serious highly contagious childhood diseases. In Chuuk state only approximately one third of that state's children are being immunized. The Committee was deeply troubled and disappointed by these figures. This was also surprising to the Committee as in previous years' hearings the understanding was that immunization coverage rates were close to 75 or 80% for our Nation.

The Department of Health and Social Affairs stated that much of the difficulty they face is due to lack of transportation to the outer islands. The Department stated that at times their request for use of the ship has been denied and that particularly for the Yap and Chuuk outer islands the route does not lend itself to this program's work as they need to pick up vaccines from cold storage periodically. The Committee voiced its displeasure regarding this statement, as well as, as it had also not been communicated that transportation was such a

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significant issue, and the Committee stated that if this is the situation hearings with all the relevant departments need to take place to ensure this is resolved. Also, the Department stated that funding transportation was also an issue at times. The Committee conveyed its willingness to entertain a request for funding, however, once again stated that this had not been an issue in previous meetings. Lack of sufficient trained healthcare staff was also mentioned as a problem for this program.

Your Committee appreciates the program summary and detailed budget, which are attached for the information of members. The Committee is distressed that more effort and time has not been put into this program. With the lives of our children at stake the Committee expected that this would be one of the highest priority activities done by our National and State Departments of Health. Further, the poor performance of this program comes at a time when all U.S. federally funded programs are coming under more scrutiny. The Department needs to do better in order to protect the health of our children and to ensure funding will continue for future use.

Your Committee is strongly supportive of immunization of all our Nation's children, and recommends adoption of the resolution accepting grant funding for the coming year. However, the Committee requests detailed information be transmitted to it regarding the outer islands and villages current rates of immunization so it can understand where the problems are on the local level. It will then hold additional hearings to make sure issues for this program are resolved. Your Committee asked if it was realistic to set a goal of 60% for the overall rate of immunization for 2017, and the Department stated they thought that was achievable.

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It is therefore, for the reasons set forth above, your Committee on Health and Social Affairs supports the grant activities proposed to be funded, it is in accord with the intent and purpose of C.R. No. 19-351, and recommends its adoption in the form attached hereto as C.R. No. 19-351.

Respectfully submitted,

/s/ Bonsiano F. Nethon
Bonsiano F. Nethon, chairman

/s/ Ferny S. Perman
Ferny S. Perman, vice chairman

/s/ Tiwiter Aritos
Tiwiter Aritos, member

/s/ Florencio S. Harper
Florencio S. Harper, member

/s/ David W. Panuelo
David W. Panuelo, member

/s/ Joseph J. Urusemal
Joseph J. Urusemal, member

/s/ Alik L. Alik
Alik L. Alik, member