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February 1, 2017

The Honorable John Kelly
Secretary of Homeland Security
Washington, DC 20528

Dear Secretary Kelly,

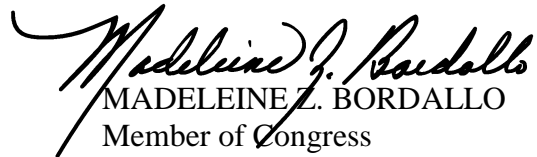
I write regarding additional potential Executive Orders imposing further immigration restrictions. In particular, I am concerned that another order without sufficient clarification could have detrimental impacts on Guam's workforce, which is already experiencing labor shortages impacting major military construction projects associated with the modernization of U.S. military force posture in the region. As you may know, the United States and Japan are in the midst of realigning nearly 10,000 Marines from Okinawa throughout the Pacific as part of a critical agreement which better adapts our force posture in the region for 21st century threats. Nearly 5,000 Marines are expected to arrive in Guam over the next five years, requiring significant military construction, including the construction of a new Marine Corps Base.

Over the past year, Guam has experienced a drastic reversal in the administration of the H-2B visa program, resulting in less than ten percent of renewal applications being approved. Because of our remote location and limited indigenous workforce, Guam has relied on off island workers to support our industries, in particular the military construction, health care and tourism industries. The rash of denials not only jeopardizes our military posture in the region but also the economic well-being of our island. We cannot let the past failures of implementing the H-2B visa program on Guam be the rationale for continued denials.

I worked diligently with the previous Administration to seek regulatory relief to this crisis which has limited the workforce available on Guam to perform construction work and which has severely limited the capacity of our only private hospital that provides critical specialty services. I maintain that it is still within United States Citizenship and Immigration Services' authority to issue internal guidance to the California adjudication office for them to take a more common sense approach to providing H-2B renewals. It is critical that we improve the renewal rates for H-2B visas on Guam so that important projects can move forward and health care services can be restored to provide the necessary care to our people on Guam. I was frustrated with the lack of action in the previous Administration and hope that new leadership can take a fresh approach to this challenging problem.

Therefore, I respectfully request that any immigration-related Executive Orders do not unduly impact the Guam workforce. Furthermore, it is my hope that you and the Administration will rapidly address the H-2B visa program on Guam to ensure an adequate workforce. I look forward to working with you in that effort. If you have any questions please have your staff contact my Military Legislative Assistant, Jason McMahon, at jason.mcmahon@mail.house.gov or at (202) 225-1188. Thank you for your time and consideration of this request.

Sincerely,


MADELEINE Z. BORDALLO
Member of Congress