

STANDING COMMITTEE REPORT NO. 22-15

RE: C.R. NO. 22-38/H&SA

SUBJECT: TO CONFIRM THE NOMINATION OF MR. MARCUS H. SAMO

SEPTEMBER 14, 2021

The Honorable Wesley W. Simina
Speaker, Twenty-Second Congress
Federated States of Micronesia
Second Regular Session, 2021

Dear Mr. Speaker:

Your Committee on Health and Social Affairs to which was referred
C.R. No. 22-38, entitled:

“A RESOLUTION TO CONFIRM THE NOMINATION OF MR. MARCUS
H. SAMO TO SERVE AS THE SECRETARY OF THE DEPARTMENT OF
HEALTH AND SOCIAL AFFAIRS OF THE FEDERATED STATES OF
MICRONESIA.”

begs leave to report as follows:

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

Your Committee held a hearing on August 4, 2021, regarding the
nomination; witnesses present at the hearing included the nominee,
Mr. Marcus H. Samo, and representatives from the Office of the
President, the Office of Personnel, and the Department of Health and
Social Affairs, including Acting Secretary Moses Pretrick and his key
staff.

Education and Employment History

Mr. Samo has extensive education and employment credentials that
qualify him for the position to which he has been nominated. The
nominee graduated from Xavier High School in Chuuk State in 1986,

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RE: C.R. NO. 22-38/H&SA

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SEPTEMBER 14, 2021

earned his Bachelor of Arts (B.A.) degree in Psychology from Creighton University in Nebraska in 1990, and received a Master in Public Health (MPH) from the University of Hawaii School of Public Health in 1994. Mr. Samo is currently a candidate for a Doctor of Health Administration (DHA) from Central Michigan University, College of Health Professions. Mr. Samo has also received several Certificate and Postgraduate Credits, and has authored or co-authored numerous articles on public health in international journals, as detailed on his CV, provided in Presidential Communication No. 22-72.

Mr. Samo began his long and distinguished career in public service and specifically health services in 1994 as a Health Services Specialist and then Health Planner at the Department of Health, Education and Social Affairs (HESA) at the FSM National Government from 1994 to 2000. Mr. Samo also served as a Project Specialist for the Pacific Island Health Officers Association (PIHOA) from 1994 to 1996. From 2000 to 2004, Mr. Samo served as an Epidemiologist and Section Chief at HESA, also occasionally serving as Acting Assistant Secretary for the Department. In December 2004, Mr. Samo became a permanent Assistant Secretary at the Department, serving in that position for over sixteen years, and occasionally serving as the Acting Secretary for the Department. In February 2021, Mr. Samo was temporarily appointed Acting Secretary of the Department.

Public Hearing

Your Committee opened the hearing by welcoming everyone present and providing the nominee the opportunity to make an opening statement.

Mr. Samo thanked the Committee for holding the hearing, greeted everyone present, and expressed his respect to the traditional leaders, governors, state leadership, and all who may be listening to the hearing, and acknowledged the health directors and staff of the national and state health departments. Mr. Samo expressed his gratitude at being nominated for the position of Secretary of the

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SEPTEMBER 14, 2021

Department of Health and Social Affairs, and to the President for entrusting him with the privilege to head the Department. The nominee acknowledged that it is a particularly challenging time in the FSM due to the COVID-19 pandemic, but that he is looking forward to serving in the position if confirmed.

Mr. Samo stated that the mission of the Department, to promote and protect the health of the FSM, can be served by recognizing the challenges ahead, and continuing and strengthening current programs of the Department. Mr. Samo spoke of the need to support the skilled staff at the national and state levels, and that one of his priorities if confirmed will be to elevate the assistance provided to the states, both financial and technical. Mr. Samo stated he is ready to assume the responsibilities of the position of Secretary of the Department.

In response to questions from your Committee, the nominee confirmed that he has served as Acting Secretary many, many times over the years, including from February 2021 until recently when his nomination became active. Asked to provide examples of accomplishments while serving at the Department, the nominee indicated that his measurement for accomplishments of the Department is whether people in the FSM have felt their lives have improved and whether things have improved at the state level. Mr. Samo reiterated that programs are implemented at the state level, supporting staff at the state level and encouraging further education and development of the staff is paramount to the success of the Department.

When asked to describe an area of the Department the nominee would want to improve upon, Mr. Samo provided three such examples. First, providing the states with more assistance in funding, and guidance on how to spend resources to achieve results, would be one area. Mr. Samo reconfirmed his commitment to working with the states and his intent to be guided by state priorities in his actions as Secretary. A second opportunity for improvement would be to work and build

STANDING COMMITTEE REPORT NO. 22-15

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SEPTEMBER 14, 2021

relationships with groups outside of the "health sphere", namely NGOs, youth groups, faith-based groups, and others. Mr. Samo sees all these groups serving the same population and perceives an opportunity to innovate with them for more impactful results. Finally, Mr. Samo expressed that increasing and building on current technology can be further used to promote better health outcomes in the FSM. An example is that Pohnpei State Hospital can now digitize certain tissue samples and send to specialists in Japan in real time, this provides quick diagnosis and treatment. Due to the unique geography of the FSM, FSM citizens will benefit greatly as this type of technology improves.

When asked about the overall health of the nation, Mr. Samo pointed to both improvements and areas to work on. As a nation, life expectancy is increasing, people are living longer compared to as recent as ten years ago. Access to health care has also improved. However, Mr. Samo explained that health is a subjective matter, it cannot be defined by any one measurement, and there is room for improvement in some areas, for example lifestyle and healthy development. Mr. Samo noted that one area to continue to work on is financing and the cost of health care, and the need to figure out how to provide health care at a cost the country can afford. As the country matures, this is an area that will need re-examining, or the country may continue to experience out-migration.

Witnesses from the Office of the President, Office of Personnel, and Department of Health and Social Affairs all provided testimony in support of the nominee. Witnesses noted the nominee's impeccable educational credentials, long service at the Department, including in multiple positions and serving as Acting Secretary numerous times. Witnesses further stressed that Mr. Samo and his team have demonstrated their ability to handle the stress and pressure of the COVID-19 pandemic, and if confirmed Mr. Samo will capably lead a strong team at the Department. The nominee's strong leadership skills were noted by multiple witnesses, along with his ability to

STANDING COMMITTEE REPORT NO. 22-15

RE: C.R. NO. 22-38/H&SA

SUBJECT: TO CONFIRM THE NOMINATION OF MR. MARCUS H. SAMO

SEPTEMBER 14, 2021

pull his staff together, encourage employees to develop skills, manage a team, work with the states, and represent the Department very well in international forums and meetings.

Conclusion

Your Committee recognizes the importance of the position for which Mr. Samo has been nominated. The Department of Health and Social Affairs' mandate, to promote the health and welfare of the people of the FSM, is important at all times, and even more so during the time of a global pandemic. Based on his education, experience, commitment to public service, and the support and testimony of all witnesses present at the hearing, your Committee is confident in the qualifications and abilities of the nominee, Mr. Marcus H. Samo, to lead the Department at this critical time. Your Committee believes this nominee should be confirmed, and so recommends Mr. Marcus H. Samo be confirmed as the Secretary of the Department of Health and Social Affairs.

Your Committee is in accord with the intent and purpose of C.R. No. 22-38, and recommends its adoption, in the form attached hereto.

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RE: C.R. NO. 22-38/H&SA

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SEPTEMBER 14, 2021

Respectfully submitted,

Ferny S. Perman, chairman

Tiwiter Aritos, vice chairman

Florencio S. Harper, member

Derensio S. Konman, member

Esmond B. Moses, member

Aren B. Palik, member

Joseph U. Urusemal, member