



**GUAM CHAMBER OF COMMERCE**  
**PARTNERS IN PROGRESS**

May 1, 2020

THE HONORABLE TINA MUNA BARNES

Speaker

*I Mina' Trentai Singko Liheslaturan Guåhan*

Guam Congress Building

163 Chalan Santo Papa

Hagåtña, Guam 96910

**RE: BILL 351-35. AN ACT TO ADD ARTICLE 14 TO DIVISION 1, CHAPTER 1 OF TITLE 5, GUAM CODE ANNOTATED, RELATIVE TO ESTABLISHING A BUSINESS ECONOMIC SUPPORT PROGRAM TO ASSIST THOSE MICRO BUSINESSES WHOSE OPERATIONS WERE CLOSED DUE TO THE GOVERNORS EXECUTIVE ORDER 2020-05, DUE TO THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC**

Dear Speaker Muna-Barnes,

As the 35th Guam Legislature prepares for an emergency session on Tuesday, May 5, 2020, the Guam Chamber of Commerce is hopeful that considering the present pandemic, consideration be made for any measure which supports small businesses whose operations have been severely impacted due to this COVID-19 pandemic. Our organization wholeheartedly supports Bill 351-35, because it is the ideal measure for many micro entities who were forced to shut their operations as they were deemed *non-essential* as per Executive Order 2020-05 (EO-05). These are farmers, family run businesses, barbershops, salons, coffee shops, gyms, tourism related companies, realtors, and so many other professionals. Unfortunately, many of them either missed the opportunity to avail of programs from the U.S. Small Business Administration, or did not have the resources to proceed. Nonetheless, this legislation provides economic support to at least help address operational needs.

Small businesses, and particularly, micro businesses, are a significant foundation of our economy. While the intention of the Executive Order was noted, the business community in general has faced significant challenges in the past few years through several government mandates which have either increased taxes or increased fees. Prior to this pandemic affecting our people, many small business owners were already feeling the crunch as we saw tourism numbers dwindle and economic activity scale down when the increase in the minimum wage was implemented on March 1<sup>st</sup> this year. When EO-05 shut down the businesses, many entities dug into their cash reserves and savings to survive. Some companies that did not have reserves or savings have closed for good.

As the economy phases into a recovery mode, many companies and non-profit organizations are uncertain what the future will bring for their respective entities. Providing them some financial support, even if its minimal, would infuse some optimism. If this will help with the payment of deferred utility bills, payroll, benefits, or even replace some lost income, it is certainly a start.

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*Letter to Speaker Tina Muña-Barnes*

*Re: Bill No. 351-35*

The Government of Guam has received over \$100 million from the CARES Act relief efforts, and it is ideal that a percentage of those monies be invested into stimulating the economy. Bill 351-35 accomplishes this goal. Therefore, the Guam Chamber of Commerce humbly requests for your consideration of Bill 351-35 as an emergency measure, waiving the public hearing; and having it placed on the May 5th agenda for discussion. Prolonging this legislation by another month or two would defeat the purpose of the measure, as it is likely that the funds would be depleted by then.

Many of the businesses who would benefit from this legislation may not be members of our organization, but they contribute to our economy, and this is exactly the reason why we stand in support of providing them the much-needed assistance. Thank you very much for the opportunity to present our request, and we do hope it is considered for next week's session agenda. As always, we are open to a discussion on this or any other issue. Wishing you a great and safe weekend.

Sincerely,

  
CATHERINE CASTRO  
President

cc: Senators, 35th Guam Legislature