



# THE OCEAN FOUNDATION

## **A Bill for Climate Change Planning, Mitigation, and Adaptation in the U.S. Territories and Freely Associated States - 2020**

Reference: [https://naturalresources.house.gov/imo/media/doc/GRIJAL\\_143\\_xml.pdf](https://naturalresources.house.gov/imo/media/doc/GRIJAL_143_xml.pdf)

Climate Strong Islands Network: <https://oceanfdn.org/the-climate-strong-islands-declaration/>

Recommendations on behalf of the Climate Strong Islands Network for the draft legislation:

1. **Solar Schools:** To further the intent of the legislation to improve island resilience following hurricanes and typhoons, consider adding a program for upgrading school infrastructure with solar energy and battery storage. K-12 public schools, colleges, and universities in islands become community shelters during typhoons, hurricanes, tsunamis and other disasters. Schools become command centers for the distribution of food and supplies. Upgrading school infrastructure with solar photovoltaics and battery storage will reduce greenhouse gas emissions and greatly improve island resilience as electricity is often wiped out for weeks or months following a disaster.

A bright spot example of this happened in Puerto Rico. Following Hurricanes Irma and Maria, Blue Planet Energy equipped over 100 schools across 83 municipalities with solar energy and battery storage. The project can serve as a roadmap to resiliency for other island communities.

2. **Sec 7. Energy Efficient Appliance Rebate Program:** This could be an excellent program to improve for demand-side management for utility providers. However, we would like to caution that increased waste generation is a potential unintended consequence. Waste management is a serious challenge for islands. Guam and others are currently working to transition to a circular economy, which entails designing out waste and pollution, regenerating natural systems, and keeping materials in use. There is limited space for landfills and a lack of local recycling options in islands. In Guam, illegal dumping of trash and appliances in jungles and roadways is too common. To prevent illegal dumping and the overflow of landfills, we recommend that the rebate program outline clear requirements and funding for disposal and recycling of old appliances.

3. **Sec 8. Office of Insular Affairs Technical Assistance Program:** Consider tasking the new program to assist in developing roadmap plans for each island territory and Freely Associate States (FAS) to achieve 100% renewable energy by 2045.
4. **Sec 9. Climate Change Insular Research Grant Program.** While climate research is extremely important, funding should also be provided for action projects that help islands adapt to climate impacts.
  
5. **Sec 12. Coral Reefs:** Waiving the match requirement for NOAA CRCP cooperative agreements will be extremely helpful for islands that struggle to identify any new sources of local funding. Consider expanding match waivers for territories and FAS from other environmental and STEM-focused agencies, such as USDA, NOAA, USGS, NSF, and NIH.
  
6. **Sec 15. Insular Area Climate Change Interagency Task Force.** Outline a mechanism for insular area voices to be included in this task force, through membership seats or an official advisory board. The U.S. Climate Strong Islands Network, facilitated by the Global Island Partnership and The Ocean Foundation, is one body that could help with this. We suggest that the Climate Strong Islands Network (CSIN) be invited as an entity for formal stakeholder input, in an early, on-going and regular fashion, throughout the Task Force's tenure, as an appropriate mechanism to facilitate input from "territorial governments and other territorial stakeholders" who are members of CSIN. Involving CSIN throughout the process instead of simply at the end through the required formal public comment period will provide an opportunity for genuine and productive dialogue between federal agencies and territorial stakeholders. As communities dealing with the disproportionate burden of the effects of climate change, working with CSIN will provide federal agencies with unique insight into the needs and challenges that climate change continues to present to territorial stakeholders across the globe.