

Hazel Marie Doctor

Testimony on “Subcommittee on Fisheries, Wildlife, Oceans and Insular Affairs
Legislative Hearing on P.L. 110-229 and H.R. 1466”
July 14, 2011

My name is Hazel Marie Doctor. I am a nineteen-year-old college sophomore.

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to testify today as a United States citizen who faces a terrible choice as the result of Public Law 110-229.

As this law goes into effect, I am going to have to choose between my country – America, and my family.

That is a choice no one should have to face.

It is my hope that you will hear my testimony and consider amending the law Congress passed three years ago without being fully aware of the impact it would have on U.S. citizens like myself.

Let me tell you a little bit about myself and my family. I was born on Saipan on January 21, 1992 and have lived on this island my whole life. I have a younger sister named Jackie who is eleven years old and was born and raised on Saipan as well. As persons born in the Northern Marianas, my sister and I are citizens of the United States. Like you, we are Americans. And throughout our lives, we have looked on America as our home.

But my story really begins with my wonderful parents. My father, Alex, and my mother, Tina, are two of the most hard-working people I know. They have resided and worked in the Marianas for over twenty years after leaving the Philippines in search of a better life. They too call America their home. But unlike my sister and me, our parents are not U.S. citizens. They are not even permanent residents. Instead, they are considered “temporary” workers, even after all these years. They remain nationals of the Philippines because local Marianas immigration and labor laws did not afford them the opportunity to become full members of this U.S. democratic society.

My parents, along with thousands of other “temporary” workers, have contributed enormously to the economic development of the Commonwealth as nurses, business managers, construction workers, and in countless other jobs. Over time my parents, like so many other people, built their lives here. They put down roots and raised their children. They volunteered in the community and formed lifelong friendships. In short, they became part of the fabric of Marianas society.

At this point, however, it is unclear what will become of us, our parents, our relatives, our families. It is the intention of Public Law 110-229 to send all foreign workers home. That includes my parents. So, our family will be faced with some difficult decisions. Should my sister

and I go with our parents to the Philippines to keep the family together, or stay behind in the America, the only home we have ever known?

But why should we have to choose between our family and our country? We do not want to be separated from our families and the one home we know and love. We want our family -- and all families who call the Marianas home -- to be able to stay together. We also want to continue living here in the Northern Marianas to pursue our own goals and dreams. For me, my wish is to come back after college to serve as a psychiatrist and still see my parents and my sister living in their home on Saipan. It is also my wish to see other U.S. citizens who are the children of long-term guest workers return to the Commonwealth as physicians, accountants, and more to serve the community.

We believe separating our families would be immoral; it would be a grave injustice and a critical democratic error, so we ask you to protect our families. We ask you to support H.R. 1466, which will allow our families to remain in the Northern Marianas with the same rights they had under Marianas immigration law. And we ask that you act now for the sake of our families and our future.

Thank you again for giving me the opportunity to speak before you.