

**Congress of the United States**  
**Washington, DC 20515**

October 20, 2015

The Honorable Esther Kia'aina  
Assistant Secretary for Insular Affairs  
U.S. Department of the Interior  
1849 C Street NW  
Washington, DC 20240

Dear Assistant Secretary Kia'aina,

We write to express our serious concern regarding the recent notification that the Close Up Foundation received from the Office of Insular Affairs that they will be required to apply for a competitive grant for the FY 2016 cycle. We are concerned that this change in policy is contrary to Congressional intent and the FY16 budget justification OIA provided to Congress earlier this year. As it has in previous appropriations requests, OIA's FY16 budget justification provided for specific funding in the amount of \$1.1 million for the Close Up Foundation program in the territories.

We supported OIA's top line budget request for OIA's Assistance to Territories program, in part, with the understanding that OIA was again requesting specific funding for the Close Up Foundation's program. We reaffirm our support for OIA's partnership with the Close Up Foundation. The Close Up Foundation's program— which allows students and educators from Guam, American Samoa, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, the Federated States of Micronesia, the Republic of the Marshall Islands, the Republic of Palau, and the United States Virgin Islands to participate in civic education programs— is crucial to cultivating the future civic leaders our territories need to tackle the unique challenges our jurisdictions face.

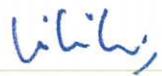
We wholeheartedly support OIA's partnership with the Close Up Foundation, and encourage OIA's fidelity to this partnership consistent with their FY 2016 budget request of \$1.1 million. We understand the difficulties budget constraints have placed on OIA and the increased demands on technical assistance funding. While we commend OIA for efforts to address climate change and other challenges that directly impact our jurisdictions, we do not believe that these efforts should come at the expense of our students and the once-in-a-lifetime leadership opportunities the Close Up program provides to them.

We respectfully request that you reconsider this decision and maintain funding for the Close Up program. We look forward to continue working with you on matters important to the territories.

Sincerely,

  
MADELEINE Z. BORDALLO  
Member of Congress

  
STACEY E. PLASKETT  
Member of Congress

  
GREGORIO KILILI CAMACHO SABLAN  
Member of Congress

  
AUMUA AMATA COLEMAN RADEWAGEN  
Member of Congress