

**Governor Lemanu P.S. Mauga Testimony**  
**U.S. Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources**  
**February 1, 2022**

Talofa and Greetings from American Samoa. I want to thank you, Honorable Chairman Manchin, Ranking Member Marshall, and distinguished members of the committee for this opportunity to share with you some of the challenges facing our territory and to thank you for your ongoing efforts to improve our nation.

First off, I would like to thank you Chairman Manchin, Ranking Member Marshall and all Members of the Committee for your role in passing the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) and the Bipartisan Infrastructure Bill (Infrastructure Investments and Jobs Act (IIJA)) in 2021. This funding has allowed us to realize what we've hoped and dreamed of.

In a year, we have repatriated thousands of our citizens in the face of Covid-19 and are able to work around travel restrictions limiting flights to and from the U.S. to two flights a month. Our vaccination efforts have reached more than 80 percent of our population and counting, and we continue to push through with our quarantine operations with the incoming flights. It has been a roller coaster but God has been good to us among the highs and the lows of 2021.

This pandemic has turned our world inside-out, thus trying to get back to normalcy is a challenge. From health and welfare, security, education, food safety and security, infrastructure, life, our freedom, and faith, are all being tested by the COVID 19. While fighting on the front line for life and death because of the pandemic, leaders can't suspend other long-time challenges of our Nation, i.e., Global Warming, Education, Health, Transportation, Security, and our basic daily needs.

Again, thank you for ARPA, and the BIPARTISAN INFRASTRUCTURE BILL in support of States and Territories.

However, American Samoa faces challenges in expediting these emergency funds. We are seeking relief of matching local funds, we ask a more flexible usage of categories of federal funding, to be reallocated locally. And due to isolation, shipping transportation for goods, fuel, building materials, not consistent and currently very slow, and especially the high cost of supplies recently, we are requesting an extension for end date or life of fundings.

We are now planning for new healthcare facilities to include hiring medical doctors and specialists, nurses, and staff in serving our population. We plan to improve our seaports and our airports in a new Terminal building and Jet bridge Access for ease of operations and security for travelers. Sea transportation service to our outer islands proved difficult due to limited vessels and shipyard maintenance services. With the help of our Congresswoman Uifa'atali Amata Radewagen and the U.S. Army, we are on our way in securing two landing crafts to service our neighboring islands and our shipyard services has improved its maintenance schedule. Funding for our schools has relieved pressure in old and worn-out buildings, needed maintenance and preparations for distance learning in case of emergencies and community spread in Covid cases. We have been able to use funding to source and improve on technology in our networks not only in Education but our government.

Being isolated in the South Pacific, access to broadband is a critical link to the outside world and our security, along with our aging clean water infrastructure and long overdue road restoration has given us gratitude for the Bipartisan Infrastructure Bill. This has been a welcomed relief to our territory and it has relieved ongoing pressures and anxiety in dealing with our Aging Infrastructure.

Given the current plans and projects funded by this legislation, the threat of climate change and rise in sea level continues to loom over our islands in real time. As a result, we plan to create barriers through seawalls and other mitigation efforts to resolve this horrifying threat. We are also preparing ourselves for migration to higher ground of sea-level villages and improving roads towards the hills and mountains as the threats of tsunami-producing volcanoes and earthquakes remain a constant threat and increasing hazard causing anxiety to our people.

It has also been my pleasure to work with our associations of Western Governors and National Governors to address some of the issues that hinder the use of funds as Governor's have critical priorities specific to their own state that are on top of their state's needs where flexibility and discretion is necessary.

Workforce development, Cybersecurity, Disaster Preparedness and Response, Transportation Infrastructure, and Energy and Water Quality are only a few of the issues that require Interagency Collaboration with Congress and the federal government for our territory and the Insular Areas.

We thank you once again for this opportunity for American Samoa to address this distinguished committee for your ongoing efforts for improvement. We hope that 2022 will be a productive year for America. Fa'afetai.