



## **The Chuuk Advisory Group on Education Reform**

c/o Graduate School USA, Pacific Islands Training Initiative  
900 Fort Street Mall, Suite 1540, Honolulu, Hawaii 96734

August 13, 2014

Johnson Elimo, Governor, Chuuk State  
Nikolao Pula, JEMCO Chairman, US Government  
Lorin Robert, JEMCO Vice-Chairman, FSM Government

Dear Sirs:

The Advisory Group on Education Reform in Chuuk would like to update you on the progress of our collaborative work with your respective offices, the Chuuk Board of Education (CBOE), the Chuuk Department of Education (CDOE), and the Chuuk State Legislature. While wishing to once again thank you and the above mentioned stakeholders for your continued support and commitment to education reform, we are also writing to express concerns of a grave nature.

We have worked closely with CBOE and CDOE for nearly two years now and while the overall pace of reform has been slow, there is meaningful progress. Consultants have worked with key officials to help develop new personnel policies, organizational structure, and implement the Chuuk Education Reform Plan. Chuuk High School's student performance has improved markedly as demonstrated by their COMET results and representing Chuuk State in the National Law Debates three years in a row. CDOE completed numerous necessary school consolidations and nearly completed the accreditation review of all schools. CDOE has organized a new executive management team that is improving their daily operations at the central office and the delivery of services to schools. These are some examples of our success working together.

At the last Advisory Group meetings in Chuuk from June 16<sup>th</sup>-20<sup>th</sup>, the various efforts of the department and the board culminated in a number of mutually-agreed milestone commitments and next steps:

- a. The new personnel policies were reviewed and adopted by CBOE. An important component of these policies is one-year contracts for employees, with modified leave policies, renewable based on satisfactory annual performance evaluations.
- b. The new personnel policies included a restructuring of the central office to reflect 61 positions and the Fiscal Year 2015 budgets and beyond thereby will be able to support planned wage increases through certification and enhanced recruitment and more school-based expenditure allocations. All positions (except for the Director, Deputy, and 3 Chiefs) were to be vacated, announced, and new candidates interviewed within 30 days after the end of June.
- c. The CBOE approved a policy for the department to actively recruit new, qualified teachers to replace unqualified and retiring teachers and to start a new teacher/principal training program. With the full support of the Advisory Group and budget reprogramming approved by OIA, the department has since interviewed over 50 candidates for teaching and other positions at CDOE and commenced the training programs for teachers/principals.

With the JEMCO Annual Meeting scheduled in Honolulu, HI on August 28<sup>th</sup>, the Advisory Group would like to inform you of its intention to recommend to JEMCO that the Fiscal Year 2015 Education Sector and Supplemental Education Grants for Chuuk be approved contingent upon the continuation and full implementation of those joint commitments that had been achieved as of the last Advisory Group meeting. We take the word and actions of the Board—as expressed at that time—as a sign of good faith that reform commitments for the benefit of Chuuk’s children will be fulfilled to the best of all of our collective abilities.

In bottom line terms, we commend CBOE for adopting reform-oriented policies and CDOE for implementing them. At the same time, there is no room for regressive actions on the part of the CBOE, CDOE or the collective leadership of Chuuk State. To the extent that there have been any reversals of progress or withdrawals of reform action approvals, we ask you, Governor, in collaboration with the leadership and the key officials, to ensure the full cooperation by the board and the department to immediately complete interviewing candidates for the central office positions, to implement the one-year contracts for employees, and advance the approved teacher recruiting efforts so the department can be fully functional and teachers/principals are prepared to open schools later this month. It would be massively disruptive and disappointing beyond words if the failure of the CBOE, among others, to stick to commitments made through June 20, 2014, led to an interruption of funding for education at the outset of the coming fiscal year.

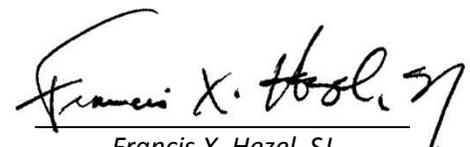
Governor, the Advisory Group also looks forward to discussing with you in person, at our next opportunity, additional concerns we have about the appropriate role going forward of the CBOE in relation to the operations of the education department and the need for the board to more systematically document policy decisions. We also stand ready to address any concerns you may have.

We believe that we have made meaningful progress thus far and have been successful in resolving even the most difficult issues when all the partners work together sincerely. As was agreed to by the high level stakeholders, the Advisory Group will continue to monitor progress and report any challenges to all three parties, including, as necessary, JEMCO. We trust however, that in spite of inevitable challenges on the road to reform, we will be able to work together to create a better future for the Chuuk education system.

Sincerely,

  
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