

# Bordallo: Denied work visas impact buildup, GRMC

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(Photo: Rick Cruz/PDN)

Federal immigration's increased denial rates for renewing or petitioning foreign workers may adversely affect health care services and the military buildup in Guam, Guam Delegate Madeleine Bordallo said Tuesday.

Bordallo wrote to U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services Director Leon Rodriguez on Feb. 26 to state her concerns.

Guam's only private hospital, which opened last year, is among companies affected by the increased denial rates for renewing foreign worker visas, particularly for nurses, Bordallo stated.

The sharp increase on the rates of denial of H-1B and H-2B visa renewals pose a significant impact and challenge to the Guam Regional Medical City's ability to provide patient care to the people of Guam, Bordallo wrote.

"There is a demonstrated and clear shortage of qualified nurses on Guam," she added.

GRMC's parent company, a major hospital network in the Philippines, invested in the development of Guam's private hospital.

A letter from the USCIS office in Laguna Niguel, Calif., provides no clear rationale for the denial, Bordallo stated.

Guam construction projects related to the proposed \$8 billion Marine Corps base and support facilities, which would house almost 5,000 Marines from Okinawa, could also be affected, Bordallo wrote to USCIS.

"The increased denial rate will ultimately impact construction companies that are working to support military construction projects relating to the realignment of Marines from Okinawa to Guam," Bordallo wrote to USCIS.

The Department of Defense anticipates that total military construction spending to relocate Marines to Guam "will exceed the island's organic capacity in the coming years," Bordallo added.



Bordallo (Photo: PDN file)



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Guam is exempt from the nationwide limit on the number of workers on H-1B and H-2B visas because of the expected increase in military buildup-related construction projects, Pacific Daily News files show.

USCIS' website states workers on H-2B visas, commonly used for health care and construction workers, can be hired if an employer can prove that their hiring is for temporary jobs.

H-2B visas can be renewed, but for not longer than three years, according to USCIS' website.

Guam-based immigration attorney Catherine Bejerana Camacho said last week a Guam construction company, which she does not represent, had received a denial letter on its request to hire about 100 construction workers who are needed for a recently won contract bid.

Bordallo sought clarification whether any rules were recently changed that may have led to the increase in denial rates.

She also asked USCIS if the processing had been outsourced to a private entity.



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