



# Association of Pacific Island Legislatures

American Samoa  
Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands  
FSM, State of Chuuk  
FSM, State of Kosrae  
FSM, State of Pohnpei  
FSM, State of Yap  
Island of Guam  
Republic of Kiribati  
Republic of the Marshall Islands  
Republic of Nauru  
Republic of Palau  
State of Hawaii

## A RESOLUTION

### APIL Resolution No. 39-GA-06

**“Calling upon the APIL Member Jurisdictions to engage in regional cooperation to increase Mental Health Awareness by advocating, initiating and, where appropriate, facilitating multisectoral collaboration and coordination to help bridge the gap in Mental Health Care.”**

1           **WHEREAS**, the theme of this year APIL General Assembly is “Health is Wealth:  
2   Social and Economic Well-Being of our APIL Pacific Community”; and

3           **WHEREAS**, the sponsors of this resolution wish to call to the attention of the  
4   General Assembly that in the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, like in so  
5   many other communities in the APIL Pacific, we are facing a serious mental health crisis;  
6   and

7           **WHEREAS**, just in the last few years, both families and individuals alike from  
8   throughout the APIL Pacific have had to endure many traumas, ranging from the ongoing  
9   COVID-19 pandemic which has swept across our region of the world to the multiple  
10   typhoon disasters before that which have devastated our islands; and

11          **WHEREAS**, the adverse effects of these recent traumas have been amplified by  
12   the pervasive hardships which are evident throughout the APIL Pacific of unemployment,  
13   homelessness, utility disconnections, illness, hunger, and violence; and

14          **WHEREAS**, in seeking to cope with these traumas and hardships, many of our  
15   people, very likely some of ourselves gathered here at the APIL General Assembly  
16   included, are struggling with stress, uncertainty, anxiety, grief and depression; and

17          **WHEREAS**, the cumulative impacts of COVID-19 and the disparities caused by  
18   social inequities have become increasingly apparent as the negative consequences of  
19   prolonged stress continue to permeate into the very hearts of our homes, villages and  
20   schools, highlighting our shared responsibility to protect and strengthen the mental well-  
21   being of our communities by ensuring individuals have readily available and equitable  
22   access to quality mental health care; moreover

23          **WHEREAS**, the magnitude of the worries and fears that have been associated with  
24   the recent COVID pandemic have highlighted the need for an expanded provision of mental

1 health services in a context already marked by a gap in access to these services, making it  
2 urgent to bridge that gap and promote the expansion of mental health services for all of the  
3 people of our island jurisdictions; and as a consequence

4 **WHEREAS**, it has become the sense of the General Assembly of the Association  
5 of Pacific Island Legislatures that at this time in our history when the personal obtainment  
6 and maintenance of mental balance and stability has become an increasingly  
7 insurmountable challenge for many of our people, the need to expand opportunities to reach  
8 as many individuals in need as possible cannot be more vital; and

9 **WHEREAS**, in building our internal capacities to address the unmet mental health  
10 care needs of our people, we acknowledge the significant importance of cultural  
11 competence as a foundational pillar for reducing disparities in access to mental health care  
12 which can be achieved through the adoption of culturally sensitive strategies and the  
13 inclusion of more locally licensed mental health providers; and

14 **WHEREAS**, in tapping into external resources to address the unmet mental health  
15 care needs of our people, we acknowledge that “telehealth” is a viable two-way, interactive  
16 technology to provide health care and facilitate client-provider interactions at a distance  
17 which has the potential to address the treatment gap among disparate communities, making  
18 treatment services more accessible and convenient, thereby improving health outcomes and  
19 reducing health disparities; and

20 **WHEREAS**, just as importantly, telehealth programs can provide a desired form  
21 of digitalized access to professional assistance, most especially for those:

- 22 (1) needing services who reside outside of our main islands;  
23 (2) for people who may avoid accessing intervention due to stigma or shame;  
24 (3) for people who have special or complicated mental health needs and require access  
25 to specialized services; and  
26 (4) for those uncomfortable with seeking care from someone they may see in the  
27 community; and

28 **WHEREAS**, as a model in addressing this urgent need for digital access to  
29 specialized health services through the means of the internet, the Commonwealth of the  
30 Northern Mariana Islands is currently assessing the opportunity to join the Psychology  
31 Interjurisdictional Compact, or PSYPAC, which will expand access to mental health  
32 services, including specialized care not available in the islands, by facilitating the practice  
33 of telepsychology across jurisdictional lines, and allowing temporary licenses for in-person  
34 practice; and

1       **WHEREAS**, in summation, it is the sense of the delegates convened in this General  
2 Assembly of the Association of Pacific Island Legislatures that the need for action  
3 throughout all of the island communities of the APIL Pacific to provide meaningful and  
4 effective mental health care for our people and the opportunities to share the experiences  
5 of those jurisdictions undertaking novel approaches to our mutual challenges in mental  
6 health care are indisputable and urgent because mental health has intrinsic and instrumental  
7 value and is integral to our people's well-being; now, therefore,

8       **BE IT RESOLVED** by the Association of Pacific Island Legislatures, 39<sup>th</sup> Annual  
9 General Assembly, FSM State of Pohnpei, October 12-14, 2022, that the Association of  
10 Pacific Island Legislatures hereby calls upon the APIL Member Jurisdictions to engage in  
11 regional cooperation to increase Mental Health Awareness by advocating, initiating and,  
12 where appropriate, facilitating multisectoral collaboration and coordination to help bridge  
13 the gap in Mental Health Care; and

14       **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that each Member Jurisdiction is respectfully  
15 requested to include in its country report at the next APIL Board of Directors meeting, an  
16 analysis of the progress of that Member in its respective plan to bridge the gap in mental  
17 health care, which report should include that Member's endeavors to provide for the  
18 sharing with all Members of the APIL, that Member's challenges and accomplishments;  
19 and

20       **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that the APIL President shall certify and the  
21 APIL Secretary shall attest to the adoption hereof and that copies of the same shall be  
22 transmitted to the Chief Executive and Presiding Legislative Officers of each Member  
23 Jurisdiction of the Association of Pacific Island Legislatures and to the Directing Officers  
24 of the Health Services Department of each of the Member Jurisdictions of the Association  
25 of Pacific Island Legislatures.

**DULY AND REGULARLY ADOPTED ON THE 13<sup>TH</sup> DAY OF OCTOBER, 2022.**



**SHELLEN G. NETH**  
**PRESIDENT**



**VINNIE V. F. SABLAN**  
**SECRETARY**

