

**John A. Kitzhaber, MD**  
Governor



**Oregon Commission on  
Asian and Pacific Islander Affairs**  
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Testimony in Support of HB 2522  
Monday, February 9, 2015  
House Committee on Health Care

Chair Greenlick, Vice Chairs Hayden and Nosse, and Representatives  
Buehler, Clem, Kennemer, Keny-Guyer, Lively and Weidner:

The Oregon Commission on Asian and Pacific Islander Affairs supports  
HB 2522, which will establish the Islander Health Coverage Gap  
Assessment Office to ensure that COFA citizens (Compact of Free  
Association, an agreement between the countries of the Republic of  
Palau, the Republic of the Marshall Islands and the Federated State of  
Micronesia and the United States) have the same access to health care as  
United States citizens residing in Oregon.

The U.S. has conducted nuclear testing in the COFA countries for  
decades, which has negatively impacted the COFA economies. In the past  
decade COFA citizens have left their home nations at a high rate due to  
their poor economies. Many COFA citizens are now living in the United  
States, where although they are legally allowed to work, they are not U.S.  
citizens.

Of those living in the U.S., many are falling through the cracks regarding  
medical insurance: a COFA citizen's employer may offer medical  
benefits to the employee and their dependents; however, the extended  
families of COFA citizens are not covered as dependents, despite the likelihood that distant  
relatives often live together under one roof as a family. Unemployed COFA citizens who are not  
immediate family members of an insured are not eligible for the Oregon Health Plan.

An important part of the Oregon Health Authority's mission is to improve population health in  
the state and this bill appropriately focuses attention on a community facing significant  
disparities.

We encourage you to positively consider HB 2522.

Signed:

Stephen Ying, Chair, Oregon Commission on Asian Affairs and Pacific Islander Affairs

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Pacific Islander Affairs**

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