

Chair, Representative Barker, Vice Chair Representative Olson, and Committee members. My name is Loyd Henion, member of the COFA Alliance National Network or CANN. With me today is David Anitok, President of the Oregon Marshallese Community, and past President of CANN.

I want to first say that I am deeply appreciative of Fred Shafer, Commander of the National Association of Atomic Veterans for supporting the Marshallese quest to reveal the disastrous effects that US bomb testing had on the Islanders and how those tests were equally damaging to the American service men and women involved with the testing and cleanup missions. It was through Fred Shafer and his NAAV members that Representative Sprenger became acquainted with the serious and continuing problems these people all face from the pernicious effects of exposure to high radiation that still exists in the Islands. The Marshallese people cannot thank Representative Sprenger enough for this powerful Resolution which serves as a strong memorandum to the Oregon legislature of just how serious the consequences of our bomb testing has been in the Marshall Islands.

Shortly after I hired a Marshallese woman to take care of my aging mother, I became aware of some inexplicable oversights in our treatment to this population. There are obligations that we have shirked that seem totally inconsistent with our Treaty with them. For example I learned that we were treating our legal COFA residents like undocumented aliens and issuing only temporary Driver's License cards. I felt determined to assist this community with navigating the pathway for passing a state of Oregon bill to correct this injustice. I want to once again express our appreciation to the 2013 Oregon legislature for "righting" this Driver's License injustice by passing HB 2517 unanimously. Because the Oregon Legislature took action our COFA residents now can live more freely among us as they now find it a bit easier to get apartments, bank loans, and even jobs.

Our CANN group knows that a huge issue was the removal of our COFA neighbors from Medicaid in 1996. They are taxpayers living and working legally among us. We also recognized that nothing was going to change due to the gridlock at the national level. Just like the Driver's License issue, it is up to each of the states to correct this dreadful oversight. We believe passing HB 2522 once again allows Oregon to do the right thing for their health care needs. AND in this case doing the right thing is by far the cheapest thing. By discerning eligibility, Oregon will take important steps in correcting another important oversight that has been allowed to continue for far too long for these people to whom we owe so much. I ask each of you to join in supporting HB 2522 as it moves through the legislative process.

So I want to close by thanking Representative Sprenger for helping to enlighten all Oregonians about our past with the Marshallese people and I thank each of you for being a part of that process.

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