

Kate Brown
Governor



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Testimony in Support of HB 2522
Monday, June 15 2015, HR F
Joint Subcommittee on Human Services

Co-Chairs Nathanson and Bates, Rep. Boone, Rep. Keny-Guyer, Rep. Olson, Rep. Stark, Sen. Steiner Hayward, and Sen. Winters:

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 your "yes" vote on HB 2522.

Signed:

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

OR Commission on Asian and Pacific Islander Affairs

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