



SEIU Supports HB 4071

Chair Greenlick and Members of the House Committee on Health Care:

The Service Employees International Union (SEIU) Local 49, together with SEIU Local 503, represents over 60,000 workers in Oregon and we urge your support for HB 4071, the Compact of Free Association (COFA) Premium Assistance bill.

We represent many COFA workers from Palau, Micronesia and the Marshall Islands who work at low-wage jobs for subcontractors at the Port of Portland airport. They work as transporters, ramp agents, baggage handlers, airline janitors and fuelers. Health care is just out of reach for many of these workers given their hourly wages.

Given that these workers make under the 138% of federal poverty level—the level that this bill seeks to address—they cannot afford to purchase private health insurance and they are not eligible for Medicaid. In 1996, Congress stripped this population of their access to Medicaid despite the fact that the federal government allows them to live, work and pay taxes here.

HB 4071, the COFA Premium Assistance bill would allow this population of workers to purchase plans on the state exchange marketplace through the Department of Consumer and Business Services and the state will foot the bill for the subsidies that the federal government prohibits them from receiving, thus making health care affordable and accessible. The benefit plans are comparable to the Medicaid plans but the plans themselves will be housed in the private marketplace.

SEIU urges you to vote yes on this critical bill to extend health care to our dedicated workers that need health care to remain healthy and active members of the airport's workforce.

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