

STAFF MEASURE SUMMARY**House Committee On Health Care****Fiscal:** Fiscal impact issued**Revenue:** Revenue impact issued**Action Date:** 02/01/16**Action:** Do Pass And Be Referred To Ways And Means By Prior Reference**Meeting Dates:** 02/01**Vote:**

Yeas: 9 - Buehler, Clem, Greenlick, Hayden, Kennemer, Keny-Guyer, Lively, Nosse, Weidner

Prepared By: Sandy Thiele-Cirka, Committee Administrator

WHAT THE MEASURE DOES:

Establishes a Compact of Free Association (COFA) Premium Assistance Program administered by the Department of Consumer and Business Services (DCBS) to provide financial assistance with health care premiums and out-of-pocket costs for Pacific Islanders legally residing in Oregon under COFA. Declares an emergency, effective on passage.

ISSUES DISCUSSED:

- Oregon Health Insurance Marketplace November 9, 2015 recommendations
- Need for improved access for this population
- Current coverage gaps
- Maximum out-of-pocket expenses

EFFECT OF COMMITTEE AMENDMENT:

No amendment.

BACKGROUND:

After World War II, the United States assumed administration of the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands. The Trust controlled the development of the island economies and international relations. In 1986, the island nations under the Trust Territory were given the option of choosing between becoming a commonwealth of the U.S. or independent nations with special agreements with the United States. Three Island territories chose independence, and that independence came attached with a unique treaty, known as "Compact of Free Association." COFA agreements were made between the U.S. and the Republic of the Marshall Islands, the Republic of Palau, and the Federated States of Micronesia.

The Compact agreements allow the citizens from each of these nations to freely migrate, without work permits or visas, to study, live and work in the United States. It also allows the U.S. to have a military presence in the COFA islands in perpetuity.

House Bill 2522 was enacted by the 2015 Legislative Assembly and requires Department of Consumer and Business Services (DCBS) to develop recommendations for the creation of a premium assistance program for low-income COFA islanders to enable them to purchase health benefit plans through the health insurance exchange. Additionally, the Oregon Basic Health Program (BHP) Stakeholder Advisory Group (HB 2934, 2015) included in their recommendations the need to increase access to coverage for uninsured in the Oregon's COFA population.