



**To:**

House Committee on Health Care  
[hhc.exhibits@oregonlegislature.gov](mailto:hhc.exhibits@oregonlegislature.gov)

**March 12, 2019**

Dear Chair Salinas, Vice-Chair Hayden, Vice-Chair Nosse, and Members of the House Health Care Committee:

I am writing on behalf of the Asian Pacific American Network of Oregon (APANO) to express our **support for House Bill 2706, the COFA Dental Program Bill**. As a statewide, grassroots organization, we partner with the COFA Alliance National Network (CANN) and Micronesian Islander Community of Oregon (MIC) to support and uplift Pacific Islanders. We fight and advocate for the health and equity of COFA citizens in Oregon and across the nation.

Today, COFA citizens struggle to find and receive assistance in the United States. Although they are able to legally immigrate, work, and pay taxes in the U.S., COFA citizens are barred from receiving public assistance, such as Medicaid, Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), rental housing assistance (Section 8), and SNAP benefits. This is because Congress passed the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Act (PRWORA) in 1996, categorically excluding COFA residents from many federally funded services based on their residency status.

Oregon was the first in the nation to step up and provide low-income COFA citizens the ability to purchase affordable, quality health plan coverage. During the 2016 Legislative Session, community-based organizations, led by CANN, MIC, and the Oregon Marshallese Community, along with APANO, advocated and helped pass House Bill 4071, which created the COFA Premium Assistance Program. While the COFA Premium Assistance Program successfully covers an estimate of 1,000 to 1,500 COFA enrollees, it fails to cover oral health care.

With HB 2706, we have the opportunity to ensure that low-income COFA citizens, living in Oregon, are able access quality dental care.

HB 2706 would help remove barriers that COFA citizens face in Oregon by establishing the COFA Dental Program. The program would be under the Oregon Health Authority and administered in collaboration with the Department of Consumer and Business Services. It would also contract with regional dental care organizations throughout this state, which reflects the recommendations of the COFA oral health advisory group, instituted under SB 147 (2017).<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> <https://healthcare.oregon.gov/DocResources/cofa-oral-health-report-final.pdf>



We can no longer afford to uphold a system that continues to deny our neighbors and community members access to quality health care and coverage. HB 2706 would be an important step to ensure that *all* Oregonians, regardless of who they are or where they came from, can afford and receive dental care.

I thank you for your time and consideration, and urge the House Health Care Committee to vote in support of HB 2706.

Sincerely,  
Ivy Major-McDowall  
Legislative Coordinator  
APANO