

Kate Brown
Governor



Testimony in Support of HB 2706
Joint Subcommittee on Human Services
June 11, 2019, HR 150, 8:30 am

Co-Chair Senator Beyer, Co-Chair Representative Nosse, Senators Heard and Wagner, and Representatives Hayden, Salinas, Schouten, and Stark:

On behalf of the Oregon Commissions on Asian and Pacific Islander Affairs (OCAPIA), and the Commission for Women, and at the request of their Chairs, I have prepared this testimony in support of HB 2706. My name is Bennie Moses-Mesubed and I am a COFA (Compact of Free Association) resident from the island of Palau, living in La Grande, Oregon. I am also the Director of Student Diversity & Inclusion at Eastern Oregon University (EOU), Vice President of the COFA Alliance National Network (CANN) of Oregon, and a member of the OCAPIA.

Dental services are a priority for the under-represented and marginalized communities represented by the Oregon Advocacy Commissions, which include the COFA community. We want to encourage and ensure that we provide equitable and equal access to medical and dental health for the COFA community members who currently have no dental insurance. We need to do right by all Oregonians, and solve the issue of disparate treatment. Oregonians often see COFA members as having equal access to all these services and this is not the truth.

HB 2706 establishes COFA Dental Program in Oregon Health Authority to provide dental care to low-income citizens of Pacific Islands in Compact of Free Association who reside in Oregon and lack access to affordable dental coverage. Prior to 1996, COFA members were granted equal access to basic supports like Medicaid. HB 2706 addresses the bill that passed in 1996 that changed the status of COFA community. The Federated States of Micronesia, the Republic of Marshall Islands and Republic of Palau have Compacts of Free Association with the United States based on strategic U.S. military interests in the region. U.S. military missile testing damaged the economy of the island, and residents were relocated and offered healthcare, housing and security when they moved to the U.S., and Oregon specifically.

I have worked in La Grande for several years, and I see that a lot of community members, including students and elders do not go to the dentist because they do not have dental insurance and cannot afford regular cleanings and preventive services such as regular x-rays that could prevent a problem from becoming more serious. I receive a lot of calls about how can we go to a dentist, without insurance. There is no programs for referrals. I have heard on many occasions of COFA community members waiting until a dental problem becomes an emergency, and then going to the

Oregon Advocacy Commissions Office
"Advocating Equality and Diversity"
421 SW Oak Street, Portland, OR 97204
O 503.302.9725
Email: oaco.mail@oregon.gov

OR Commission on Asian and Pacific Islander Affairs

Chanpone Sinlapasai-Okamura, Chair
David Yuen Tam, Vice Chair
Legislative members:
Senator Michael Dembrow
Representative Carla Piluso

OR Commission on Black Affairs

Jamal Fox, Chair
Lawanda Manning, Vice Chair
Legislative members:
Representative Janelle Bynum

OR Commission on Hispanic Affairs

Irma Linda Castillo, Chair
Dr. Daniel López-Cevallos, Vice Chair
Legislative members:
Senator Sara Gelser
Representative Teresa Alonso León

OR Commission for Women

Dr. Barbara Spencer, Chair
Kim Olson, Vice Chair
Legislative members:
Senator Laurie Monnes Anderson
Representative Sheri Schouten

Staff

Lucy Baker, Administrator
Nancy Kramer, Executive Assistant
Dr. Connie Kim-Gervey,
Researcher/Policy Analyst

emergency room, where the best they can hope for is a waiver of costs to have the tooth extracted: an expensive solution for Oregon that can be mitigated by HB 2706. When there is improvement in a marginalized community it is a step forward in making Oregon a more equitable state.

We strongly urge you to support HB 2706, COFA Dental Program.



Bennie Moses-Mesubed
OCAPIA Commissioner



Chanpone Sinlapasai-Okamura, OCAPIA
Chair



Dr. Barbara Spencer, OCFW Chair