

Written Testimony on House Bill 4099

February 4, 2020

Greetings to members of the Oregon Legislature, sponsors of the House Bill 4099, and other related guests.

My name is Mashmet Langbel and I am from the Marshall Islands- one of the countries under the Compact of Free Association (COFA). I am currently attending EOU pursuing a higher level of education on business administration. I've lived here in La Grande, Oregon for almost a year now.

Today, I am happy to share my experience and most importantly, to show my support on HB 4099 COFA Tuition Bill. This is a life-changing opportunity for all of us who come from the small island nations. With so much that we already have gone through, higher tuition and additional hidden fees have created another challenging fight for us. There are financial differences from what we were expecting in the educational programs, the community, and aspects of our daily living conditions.

In 2017, it started with just one transferred student straight from my country. But as of now, we have more than 40 students originally from the Marshall Islands. Eastern Oregon University is lucky to have people from diverse backgrounds, not just from my country. My experience so far is good, EOU is an amazing community, with supportive members, staffs, and faculties. Furthermore, I see greater opportunities toward the programs and degrees that are available to us.

I am happy and satisfied with what EOU has to offer, to strengthen our skills and knowledge. Unfortunately, I would say that the only thing we (COFA students) are struggling with is tuition and fees. My own country doesn't offer much of a financial support/scholarship to students who want to further their education. Each term we get only \$6,000 which is equivalent to \$18,000 (three terms times \$6,000) per year and an additional \$5,000 if a student wants to take summer classes. The scholarship grant comes under the RMI Scholarship. Besides these assets, there are two major requirements from our local scholarship to be able to continue with our scholarship fund. First, we must have a 2.50 GPA and take 12 credits (full-time) each term. If we fail to maintain either of these, we will be on probation or lose our scholarship fund.

Data below gives us an overview of the cost of attendance at EOU between states of Oregon, Washington, Idaho and nonresident/international.

	Resident	Non-resident/Intl
Tuition	\$ 7,515.00	\$ 20,160.00
Fees	\$ 1,569.00	\$ 1,569.00
Room & Board	\$ 9,852.00	\$ 9,852.00
Books	\$ 1,335.00	\$ 1,335.00

Transportation	\$ 1,323.00	\$ 1,323.00
Personal	\$ 1,788.00	\$ 1,788.00
Loan fees	\$ 123.00	\$ 123.00
Total	\$ 23,505.00	\$ 36,150.00

Non-resident from RMI, FSM, and Palau are considered transfer/international students. We fall under the category of \$36,150- but only \$23,505 for the neighboring states. To me, this is too much and not to mention that we come from a low-income country, workers that get paid a minimum of 3 dollars an hour. We come across the oceans and spent more than \$1,500 to come here only to sacrifice more.

Let's focus on tuition and fees. Like I mentioned before, we must take 12 credits (full-time) every term. If we calculate 12 online-credits for non-resident/international student, we end up with \$5,904 and \$2,532 for resident. We see a big difference here. If we add \$6,000 with \$2000-\$3,000 from financial aid we received closer to ten thousand for the term. This is not enough and cannot cover all the expenses (books, room & board, meal, supplies, transportation, personal). This information gives us detail about the annual cost of an undergraduate.

All of us who are coming from the Marshall Islands are living outside of campus. Because we cannot afford to stay in the dorms. Additionally, we don't have enough money to cover other expenses. Students from Palau and FSM are also preferring to live off-campus. Then, we divide ourselves 4-5 to share an apartment. Some of us have part-time jobs while others are searching. We are not even eligible to do work-study or work little jobs around the school campus.

Although, what I present to us might not perfect, but still the tuition and cost of attendance are beyond what we can par for. I know the relationship I have with the U.S as a COFA citizen, and I suggest that what we share, we continue to cherish for the benefit of all.

It's my only hope, that you and all those who brought forth this bill, will make the right decision in passing this bill.

Kommol tata!