

March 2, 2021

Senator Deb Patterson, Chair  
Senator Tim Knopp, Vice-Chair  
Senate Committee on Health Care  
Oregon Legislative Assembly  
900 Court Street NE  
Salem, OR 97301

Delivered electronically.

**Re: CCO Support for Senate Bill 706**

Chair Patterson, Vice-Chair Knopp and Members of the Committee:

On behalf of the undersigned coordinated care organizations, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of Senate Bill 706. Until recently, our Pacific Islander community residing in Oregon under the terms of the Compact of Free Association (COFA) could not receive Medicaid benefits, due to eligibility decisions ensconced in federal law. This assembly, recognizing the problems that lack of federal action caused for the community, created a COFA Premium Assistance Program<sup>1</sup> to help community members with recouping the cost of premiums for individual health benefit plans. In early 2021, the passage of federal COVID-19 relief legislation<sup>2</sup> deemed COFA members eligible for Medicaid.

For some community members that receive assistance through the COFA premium program, the transition may not be automatic and they might be unaware of this change. Senate Bill 706 recognizes that the work of transitioning eligible COFA community members to the Oregon Health Plan will require more work than the passage of federal legislation. The change in eligibility and the repeal of the premium assistance program places special emphasis on assisting community members with the transition from the COFA premium assistance program to the Oregon Health Plan.

In the meantime, COFA community members have developed close relationships with community-based organizations, who answer questions and provide culturally-appropriate assistance on a range of issues affecting the community. SB 706 acknowledges that the community members and organizations that serve the community can play a role in making sure that eligible individuals know about and sign up for the Oregon Health Plan.



<sup>1</sup> ORS 735.601 to 735.617.

<sup>2</sup> Consolidated Appropriations Act, Pub. L. 116-260, div. CC, tit. II, sec. 208