



February 8, 2021

Chair Dembrow, Vice Chair Thomsen and Members of the Senate Education Committee

On behalf of the American Association of University Women (AAUW) of OR, we respectfully request your support for Senate Bill 553.

In exchange for U.S. defense and other benefits, the Compact of Free Association (COFA) granted the citizens of the Federated States of Micronesia, the Republic of Marshall Islands and the Republic of Palau access to a number of federal and state public services, including public education. When residing in the United States, these persons pay the same federal and state taxes as other U.S. citizens.

If these individuals reside in Oregon, they should be able to qualify to receive financial aid and scholarships on the same basis as residents. They have a unique status under COFA, but its intent was to welcome and support these citizens on par with other United States citizens.

Unfortunately, the United States has not always lived up to the letter and the spirit of COFA agreement.<sup>1</sup> The rates of poverty among this population are high. Providing access to financial aid to students can provide a critical pathway forward.

We applaud the intent of SB 553 which is to honor the obligation that our country undertook to support the COFA citizens.

Respectfully,

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<sup>1</sup> Patsy Mink, Micronesia: Our Bungled Trust, <https://heinonline.org/HOL/LandingPage?handle=hein.journals/tlj6&div=16&id=&page> 3. Although written in 1970, many of its assertions remain valid today.