



PO Box 18606
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February 8, 2022

Dear Chair Patterson, Vice Chair Kennemer, and Members of the Senate Committee on Health Care:

On behalf of the Micronesian Islander Community (MIC), we urge you to pass SB 1538, which establishes a COFA Dental Program in the Oregon Health Authority. The Micronesian Islander Community is a statewide nonprofit in Oregon that provides support to Micronesians, with the large majority of our services provided to citizens from the Compact of Free Association. Micronesians from the Compact of Free Association include citizens from the Federated States of Micronesia (Chuuk, Kosrae, Pohnpei, and Yap), the Republic of Palau, and the Republic of Marshall Islands.

SB 1538 will provide dental care to low-income Micronesian COFA citizens who reside in Oregon. It is estimated that there are over 10,000 or more COFA citizens who live in Oregon alone [1]. Despite the restoration of Medicaid eligibility for the COFA population in 2020, there remains an estimated 250 COFA community members living in Oregon who are not eligible for Medicaid. They are individuals over the age of 65, who have Medicare, but are not eligible for Medicaid. With limited to no dental care available on the islands, many COFA citizens have untreated dental care needs. Access to dental care is necessary for an improved quality of life. Poor dental health leads to serious health consequences, from dental decay to the build up of bacteria that can enter a person's bloodstream, eventually attacking the heart, resulting in bacterial infection and in extreme cases, premature death.

The Micronesian Islander Community is aware of the significant dental needs of this community. For example, in 2019, in partnership with Medical Teams International, we were able to see seven people who received limited dental treatment (the choices were a tooth cleaning, a tooth removal, or one tooth filling). The services were valued at \$4,462, with much more dental care and follow up needed for those seven individuals.

[1] Tuberculosis Micronesian Islanders in Oregon TB Conference. "Communicable Diseases and the COFA Community in Oregon."



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SB 1538 bill would ensure that our COFA community has access to basic dental services including denture coverage, as dental coverage is not included with the original Medicare. The passage of the COFA Dental Equity bill would ensure that there are no COFA community members left behind.

With Oregon's growing COFA community, we urge you to support the passage of SB 1538, to ensure that Oregon's COFA residents receive the dental care needed.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Jackie Leung".

Jackie Leung, Executive Director
Micronesian Islander Community