

Senate Committee on Health Care

Testimony in Support of SB 1538

February 7, 2022

Chair Patterson, Vice-Chair Kennemer, and Senators Beyer, Linthicum, and Manning,

For the record, my name is Jackie Leung and I am Co-Chair of the Oregon Commission on Asian and Pacific Islander Affairs (OCAPIA). On behalf of OCAPIA, we press upon you to pass SB 1538, which establishes a COFA Dental Program in Oregon Health Authority. The program will provide dental care to low-income Micronesians of the Compact of Free Association who live in Oregon. Micronesians from the Compact of Free Association include citizens from the Federated States of Micronesia, the Republic of Palau, and the Republic of Marshall Islands.

1. OCAPIA's role is to work toward economic, social, political, and legal equity for Oregon's Asian and Pacific Islander population. We do this through advocacy, public policy research, leadership development, and partnerships.
2. In our statutory role of bringing equity focus and community voice into Oregon policy making, OCAPIA strongly supports SB 1538.

**Oregon Commission on
Asian and Pacific Islander Affairs**

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There are an estimated 17,339 Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islanders who live in Oregon, and the population is anticipated to grow by 15% from 2019 to 2029.¹ Oregon has the largest concentration of COFA citizens on the U.S. mainland with an estimate of at least 10,000 or more who live within our state alone.²

While Medicaid was restored by the federal government after twenty years for the COFA community, there are an estimated 250 COFA community members who live in Oregon who are not eligible for Medicaid. These are individuals who are over the age of 65, who have Medicare, but are not eligible for Medicaid. Medicare provides limited dental coverage, which is detrimental to the health needs of the COFA community.

Dental care is an expense that many COFA citizens cannot afford. With limited to no dental care available on the islands, many COFA citizens in Oregon have untreated dental care needs. Having good dental health is essential to overall physical and mental health. Having good dental health enables the community to speak, smile, and chew food. Poor dental care leads to serious consequences including dental decay, significant dental pain, to infections of the mouth, that could lead to long-term health conditions that started because of preventable and treatable dental infections.

SB 1538 would ensure that our COFA community has access to basic dental services including denture coverage, which 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. It would continue to fulfill a promise that Oregon made to the COFA community years ago - by ensuring that our residents, regardless of their citizenship status, have the same basic rights to affordable dental care.

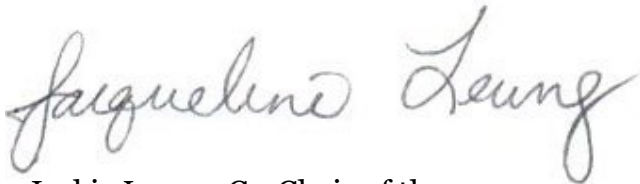
¹ MGT Consulting Group. "[Oregon Demographic Dental Care Study](#)." January 31, 2020.

² Enlet, Joe. "[Islanders of Micronesia: Understanding the History and Context of Micronesian Islander Health in Oregon](#)." Consulate General of the Federated States of Micronesia.



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

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Jacqueline Leung". The ink is a light grey or blue color.

Jackie Leung, Co-Chair of the

Oregon Commission on Asian and Pacific Islander Affairs

