

Chair Patterson, Vice Chair Hayden, and Committee members,

First, please excuse my wording as Chuukese is my native language. I want to tell you about why we need SB 442. I am currently a health care worker for a County Health and Human Services organization in Oregon. I previously worked for a nonprofit as a Health Care Assister and have gained a larger view of the challenges facing the OHA and ODHS in coming up with a safety net delivery structure that best serves the COFA communities in Oregon.

I want to express how grateful I am to COFA Alliance National Network (CANN) for all the information I had learned about SB 442 in a meeting they scheduled for COFA people and existing nonprofits. It was so informative and productive. In my view, I know it will benefit our marginalized COFA community members that were not in the area of service of each of these organizations.

Speaking of community members, and a former Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) employee, I had experienced lots of challenges as well as barriers within our communities for millions of needs that weren't heard of or addressed when collaborating with the NGO. Many were turned away due to lack of understanding of their problem. Many are not aware of what each of these organizations has provided to the community due to the lack of communication, coalition, collaboration, lack of community engagement etc. etc., between these organizations and the communities. Many said that these organizations are selective and limited in who they support, which I believe it's true.

Health Services is one major issue within our communities. People were avoiding seeing their providers or dentist, missed doctor's appointments due to language accessibility, limited knowledge, and lack of understanding about the resources, such as transportations that OHP members were eligible for and etc,. This brings me to tears when I heard of it by one community member that missed a Doctor's appointment several times and ended up kicked out from the clinic for NO show. These are the few things that we need to address and educate our community about.

Most NGOs have limited connections with the communities. Let me use the Chuukese Communities as an example: There were more than 1,000 Chuukese lived in PDX and around 800 lived in Tigard, not to mention the neighboring cities. None of these people ever came to any of the events during my 2-year period working with the nonprofit. I hardly seen Palauan, Pohnpeian, Yapese nor Kosraean coming to almost every event (Vaccine, Flu Shot, Food Box Distributions, community engagement etc..) during the COVID-19 until I left. This shows the lack of connections, communications, and community engagement between the NGOs and the COFA communities. This is where TRUST plays as another issue within our communities. We need to step in and make some differences right away to prevent the poor to become more poorer

This important bill will create an OFFICE that will tie together a network that will deliver the health and other safety net benefits together. This will include bridging together nonprofits, unofficial COFA groups, County Health orgs, churches, COFA elders, with an innovative and accountable COFA Shared Office.

Please support SB 442 to make sure all Micronesians are being served.

Adarino Petrus