

Co-chairs Senator Johnson, Representative Gomberg, and members of the committee, my name is Kathleen Jonathan. I am a native of the Republic of the Marshall Islands, currently working for the Salem-Keizer Public Schools as a Community School Outreach Coordinator for English learners from the Marshall Islands. I am also a board member of the COFA Alliance National Network (CANN). With me is Mr. Peter Phillip from the Marshall Islands, who will tell his story in our native language, and I will interpret.

First, let me say that I was very pleased to be a member of the advisory committee conducted by the Department of Consumer and Business Services (DCBS). During all the meetings that I attended, committee members representing the department wisely asked for advice on how best to serve our COFA community in giving health care for the first time to the COFA community members of Oregon. I want to express my gratitude and many thanks, especially, to Nina Remple and Chiqui Flowers for their leadership and professionalism in guiding the COFA Premium Assistance Program to be a great success. Indeed, Ms. Remple gave up her evenings at least a half a dozen times to explain the details of the program to community members.

To date, the program has served 1,676 people since its inception in 2017. It is truly an emotional experience to witness the great joy of the community members, who can go to a doctor and get needed medical attention on a timely basis rather than waiting to the last moment and going to the emergency room. There are many stories about our community members being able to access health care, and Mr. Peter Phillips is one of many. Through DCBS' leadership, many COFA community members' lives are now healthier while others' lives have been prolonged due to timely doctor visits and critical medical attention because of the actions of the Oregon legislature. DCBS was also intentional in establishing partnerships with COFA communities through community organizations like the COFA Alliance National Network (CANN), the Micronesian Islander Communities (MIC), and the Asian Pacific American Network of Oregon (APANO) to handle outreach and enrollment. Because of the success of the COFA Premium Assistance Program, I humbly ask that the committee consider the program as part of the governor's budget in the long run.

On behalf of the members of the Pacific Islander communities in Oregon, I sincerely thank you.

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