



To:

Senate Committee on Education
sed.exhibits@oregonlegislature.gov

March 11, 2019

Dear Chair Wagner, Vice-Chair Thomsen, and Members of the Senate Education Committee:

My name is Brian Liu, and I am a Community Organizer at Asian Pacific American Network of Oregon (APANO). I am writing on behalf of APANO to express our **support for Senate Bill 263, waiving non-resident public university tuition and fees for COFA citizens, immigrants, and refugees**. Our Pacific Islander community is growing significantly in our state, especially the Micronesian population, which is the fastest growing demographic in Oregon. Many have migrated to Oregon as a result of the fallout from U.S. nuclear testing, occupation, and the negative impacts of climate change, causing devastating effects on their economy and environment. As a statewide, grassroots organization, we partner with the COFA Alliance National Network (CANN) and Micronesian Islander Community of Oregon (MIC) to support and uplift Pacific Islanders. We fight and advocate for the improvement and well-being of COFA citizens in Oregon and across the nation.

The countries of Republic of Palau, Federated States of Micronesia, and the Republic of the Marshall Islands have a Compact agreement that provides the right for COFA citizens to live and work in the United States. However, when immigrating to the U.S., COFA citizens face enormous challenges. Despite the assurances of the Compact, once in the U.S., COFA citizens are excluded from many essential low-income, federal services due to the lack of their residency status. Because of this barrier, those seeking educational opportunities in the U.S. are barred from receiving federal loans, and are only eligible for Pell Grants. This is especially troubling as many COFA citizens live under 138% of the Federal Poverty Level (FPL) and cannot afford the Out-of-State tuition and fees of Oregon's public universities. As seen in the table below, several state universities cost thousands to tens-of-thousands of dollars for non-residents.

University of Oregon

In-State Resident Cost
\$26,862

Out-of-State Resident Cost
\$49,542

Oregon State University

In-State Resident Cost
\$26,937

Out-of-State Resident Cost
\$45,867



Portland State University

In-State Resident Cost
\$25,701

Out-of-State Resident Cost
\$43,656

Southern Oregon University

In-State Resident Cost
\$22,884

Out-of-State Resident Cost
\$38,814

While we are in support of this bill, we are concerned that it does not apply to community colleges. Most COFA citizens first go to community college because it's more affordable. Why does this bill fail to extend its exemption to COFA students attending community colleges? That is a question that we hope the Committee can answer and address.

SB 263 would help remove barriers that COFA citizens, immigrants, and refugees face in the Oregon community. We can no longer afford to uphold a system that continues to deny our neighbors and community members access to higher education. SB 263 would be an important step to ensure that *all* Oregonians, regardless of who they are or where they came from, can afford a quality education.

I thank you for your time and consideration, and urge the Committee to vote in support of SB 263, keeping in mind our organization's concerns.

Sincerely,
Brian Liu
Community Organizer
APANO