

SB 263 -4 STAFF MEASURE SUMMARY

Senate Committee On Education

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Meeting Dates: 3/11, 3/25

WHAT THE MEASURE DOES:

Permits students who are Compact of Free Association (COFA) islanders, refugees, or special immigrant visa holders to qualify for in-state tuition, scholarships, and financial aid from Oregon's public universities. Defines COFA islander, refugee, and special immigrant visa holder. Requires students to have attended Oregon schools and received an Oregon diploma or equivalent to qualify for in-state assistance. Declares emergency, effective on passage.

ISSUES DISCUSSED:

- History of United States and Compact of Free Association (COFA) nations
- Number of COFA college students in Oregon
- COFA students and military service
- Why Oregon COFA population is increasing
- Establishing residency for in-state tuition
- Qualifications and process to become a refugee or special immigrant visa holder
- Number of potential eligible students
- Including community colleges in the bill

EFFECT OF AMENDMENT:

-4 Permits students who are COFA islanders, refugees, or special immigrant visa holders to qualify for in-state tuition and fees at a public university if they have not established residency in another U.S. state or territory. Eliminates requirement that these students qualify for in-state tuition and fees under tuition equity provisions. Narrows the definition of special visa holders to individuals from Iraq or Afghanistan who are provided the status of special immigrant by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security under the 2006 National Defense Authorization Act, the 2007 Refugee Crisis in Iraq Act, or the 2009 Afghan Allies Protection Act. Permits the board of the Oregon Health and Sciences University to exempt students who are COFA islanders, refugees, and special immigrant visa holders from paying nonresident tuition and fees and to provide them with scholarships and other financial aid.

BACKGROUND:

The Compact of Free Association (COFA) is an international agreement between United States and the Republic of Palau, the Republic of Marshall Islands, and the Federated States of Micronesia. Under the COFA agreement, citizens of these nations may work in the U.S. as nonimmigrants for an unlimited length of time. A COFA student is a person who legally entered the United States under the COFA treaty. A refugee is a person who is granted refugee status for admission to the United States by immigration services. A special immigrant is a person who qualifies for permanent residence under the U.S. special immigrant program.

In 2018-2019, the average undergraduate tuition and fees for public universities was \$10,111 for residents and \$27,860 for nonresidents.