

SB 553 A STAFF MEASURE SUMMARY

Senate Committee On Education

Action Date: 03/15/21

Action: Do pass with amendments and requesting referral to Ways and Means. (Printed A-Engrossed.)

Vote: 5-0-0-0

Yeas: 5 - Dembrow, Gelser, Gorsek, Robinson, Thomsen

Fiscal: Fiscal impact issued

Revenue: No revenue impact

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Meeting Dates: 2/8, 3/15

WHAT THE MEASURE DOES:

Provides that students from nations that are party to Compact of Free Association (COFA), or students who are refugees or special immigrant visa holders, who reside in Oregon and no other state, are exempt from nonresident tuition and fees at public universities and are eligible for state-issued scholarships and financial aid. Requires changes take effect for 2021-2022 academic year. Requires Higher Education Coordinating Commission to allocate to Eastern Oregon University funding equal to the difference in resident and nonresident tuition and fees for each qualified COFA islander enrolled at Eastern Oregon University. Provides that funding allocation is in lieu of moneys that would otherwise be allocated under the public university support fund distribution formula. Sunsets July 2, 2025. Declares emergency, effective on passage.

ISSUES DISCUSSED:

- Enrollment of COFA students at Eastern Oregon University (EOU)
- Access to public services for COFA islanders
- Financial implications for EOU
- Historical relationship between United States and COFA nations

EFFECT OF AMENDMENT:

Removes provision for mission differentiation funding based on enrollment threshold. Requires Higher Education Coordinating Commission to allocate to Eastern Oregon University funding equal to the difference in resident and nonresident tuition and fees for each qualified COFA islander enrolled at Eastern Oregon University. Provides that funding allocation is in lieu of moneys that would otherwise be allocated under the public university support fund distribution formula. Sunsets July 2, 2025.

BACKGROUND:

The Compact of Free Association (COFA) is an agreement between the United States and the Republic of Palau, the Republic of the Marshall Islands, and the Federated States of Micronesia. It governs the relationship between these countries and allows for close economic, diplomatic and security coordination, along with eased immigration restrictions. Refugees are granted the ability to settle in the United States by U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services. Similarly, special immigrant visa holders are individuals from Iraq or Afghanistan who were given special immigrant status by certain laws passed by Congress.

Oregon law provides for exemptions from nonresident tuition and fees at public universities for students who meet certain qualifications, including other immigration classification groups.

Senate Bill 553 A provides that students from nations that are party to the Compact of Free Association, or students who are refugees or special immigrant visa holders, who reside in Oregon and no other state, are exempt from nonresident tuition and fees at public universities, including Oregon Health and Science University.