

March 8, 2021,

Senate Health Care Committee

Chair Patterson, Vice Chair Knopp, and Committee members,

I am a dual citizen of the Republic of the Marshall Islands and the United States of America. I currently live and work in Bend, OR as the executive director of a nonprofit that supports improving healthcare for our region. I am also a publicly elected school board member in the Bend-La Pine School District. Reducing educational and health care disparities is work that we are tasked with as elected officials that is inextricably linked. Thank you so much considering the SB 557, COFA Dental Equity Bill, and SB 706, COFA Medicaid Outreach Bill.

As a COFA citizen, I want to point out the injustice of the US agreeing to provide social and health services to us in this agreement, only to find out that individual states can undermine that agreement by creating their own rules around access to services.

Especially for Marshallese citizens who reside in Oregon, many of us have come to Oregon because of the nuclear testing that the US conducted in the Marshall Islands in the mid-1900's that resulted in disproportionately high levels of cancer and other health issues. In addition, many of the people that will benefit from these bills literally have no other place to go because the levels of radiation on their home islands are too high to be habitable from the testing the US did.

The health issues that COFA citizens face and their forced relocation to Oregon are both due to US military actions that we as US citizens have and continue to benefit from. Let us follow through on the promises we make to countries we form agreements with and provide the necessary support they need under our care.

With gratitude,

Rev. Shimiko Montgomery

Presbyterian U.S.A. Clergy

Bend-La Pine School Board Member