

Dear Chairwoman and Health committee all Senators,

My name is McGraig Takeshi. Thank you for the opportunity. I am from the Republic of Palau. I am a Senior at Eastern Oregon University studying Information Technology management minor in computer science and communication. I am a resident of La Grande, Oregon. Hence, I am one of the citizens of your constituency. Today, I am writing to you regarding Senate bill 557 and Senate bill 706 that is being debated/discussed.

I am writing in response to Senate Bill, a dental program in Oregon Health Authority to provide dental care to low-income citizens of the Pacific Islands in Compact of Free Association who resides in Oregon. I enrolled at the Eastern Oregon University. I work full-time while balancing being a full-time student. Since moving here, I have been working, going to school, I pay taxes and contribute to the American economy not unlike a U.S citizen would. This bill is a step closer to provide equal and affordable health and dental services.

Students under the COFA contract can pursue careers and/or education in the United States as eligible non-citizens. But with this amazing privilege, comes a lot of hard work. We must work twice as hard, sometimes more, to afford any standard requirement for students who are otherwise eligible for resident rate education costs, getting an affordable health and dental insurance. We are not offered or eligible for many scholarships, and/or grants because of our status. Therefore, we must work harder and sometimes, longer, to be able to pursue the same level of education as our non-COFA peers.

At times it becomes a major hurdle when you have to choose between a roof over your head, food on our table, or seeking affordable health care. Unfortunately, while pursuing my education and living the American dream I was diagnosed with Cancer at age 24. As a struggling college student, never once I thought I would need medical insurance especially for my diagnosis. I was faced with so many barriers that I had to navigate through that was too overwhelming and I was still in shock. I was disqualified for OHA insurance due to certain hours I am making at my job and asking for less hours did not seem to be an option for me. This was a health issue that couldn't wait for the next enrollment date and even then, it was still too expensive to afford. I was at the lowest point in my life. A struggling college student does not have access to affordable medical insurance especially when I need an emergency surgery. A year later I am still left with remaining bills and thankfully I was able to undergo surgery, physical therapy and power through treatments and still manage to graduate this spring.

It has been a challenge to follow suit due to the lack of options to seek medical care and dental. For those who dream big but have limited resources. For those who leave home and fly thousands of miles to have a fruitful future. For those who aspire to be more but are held back because of lack of financial capabilities, unable to navigate the system. There are so many of us who end up staying and pursue careers here and contribute to the economy.

While I am about to finish a chapter in my education, I feel that this will open the doors for so many like me who seek a better and brighter future. With the approval of this bill, so many more can thrive and strive for much more without the added stress of not being able to afford it.

In closing, I would like to express my gratitude for the chance to speak out for us. We are like every other student who roams these halls, every other US citizen. We sacrifice so much to be able to have stable careers and lives. We come here contributing the same way every other student does. We work just as much and just as hard as they do. We are asking and hoping for an equal opportunity to afford medical benefits, dental benefits and pursue higher education. Equal rate education is a door we can knock down so that we can all prosper, so that we can all grow. I thank you for your time and ask that you support this bill. Thank you for your service and taking time to read my email. If you have any questions, please contact me at [mtakeshi@eou.edu](mailto:mtakeshi@eou.edu).

Respectfully yours,  
McGraig Takeshi