

February 7, 2021

Chair Dembrow, Vice-Chair Thomsen and Committee members. My name is Alishia Perman and I am representing COFA Alliance Network in support of Senate Bill 553. I am from the island of Pohnpei which is one of the islands that fall under COFA and I am here today to testify on why this bill is important for my people.

Many of us Micronesians come to the United States for a better education but when we arrive, we find that it is too expensive to be able to immediately pursue a degree at a 4 year college. One of the barriers we find is that the cost of tuition is too high. This bill is essential as it will provide in state residency for Micronesians which will allow us to pursue a higher education and go straight to a 4 year college instead of taking other avenues first.

My initial plan was to attend the University of Oregon right after high school but due to the fact that I had just arrived from the islands, I was not able to attend my first choice college right away as the cost of out of state tuition was quite an issue for me. Fortunately, I was able to attend Chemeketa Community College first as the requirement for establishing residency was 90 days as opposed to the 12 month residency for other Universities.

I attended Western Oregon University after graduating from Chemeketa where I was then qualified to pay in state tuition. I sincerely believe that a lot of my fellow Micronesians would extremely benefit from this bill and be able to focus on their education rather than carrying the burden of worrying about student debt from high cost tuition. Thank you very much and I hope that you support Senate Bill 553.

Alishia Perman  
COFA Alliance National Network  
COFA citizen from the island of Pohnpei