

Testimony On SB 1538-COFA Dental Gap Bill

February 7, 2022,  
Senate Health Care Committee

Chair Patterson, Vice Chair Kennemer and Committee members,

My name is Loyd Henion, lobbyist and advocate for the COFA Alliance National Network.

The COFA Alliance National Network or CANN is a non-profit organization that is dedicated to advocating and lobbying for the restoration of social and economic justice that have been denied to COFA citizens living in Oregon and the US. COFA citizens are permanent legal residents of the US by virtue of a unique treaty with the US known as the Compact of Free Association (COFA). This compact is with three Pacific Island countries, The Republic of the Marshall Islands, The Federated States of Micronesia, and the Republic of Palau. No other nation has such a treaty with the US. It is noteworthy to mention that COFA citizens swear an oath to the United States when their people join the military, which they do in larger percentages than any US state.

CANN is grateful to the Oregon Legislature for their help in restoring some of the most egregious of these inequities having enacted 6 COFA bills. Still there remains more to be done, and SB 1538 while targeting a relatively small group will fill a gap in dental health care coverage to some COFA Islanders 65 and older.

In general, this program would be available to anyone who is a COFA resident, whose income is under 138% of the FPL, who are not eligible for Medicaid so that people over 65, with or without Medicare can receive dental care. The bill ensures that COFA residents that have Medicare would be eligible for basic dental services plus dentures, as dental coverage is not included with original Medicare. We estimate that around 250 COFA Islanders who meet the federal income standards that are 65 and over will be able to receive dental care under this bill. We very much appreciate your continued support for Oregon's COFA population. It fulfills a healthcare promise we have been making to them. I really appreciate this committee making this bill a high priority. It does fill a needed gap.

Loyd Henion

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