

To: Senate Health Care Committee
From: Alicia Temple, Oregon Law Center
Date: February 6, 2022
Re: Access to dental services for COFA, SB 1538

Chair Patterson and members of the committee:

On behalf of the Oregon Law Center (OLC), I respectfully request your support for SB 1538 to extend access to dental services for members of the Compact of Free Association (COFA).

OLC is a non-profit organization that provides free legal help to people struggling to make ends meet. Our mission is to achieve justice for low-income communities in Oregon by providing a full range of the highest quality civil legal services. We advocate for our clients and for the services and programs that help them to both overcome poverty and achieve justice. Providing access to healthcare services for the COFA population is an issue of justice.

Over the past few years, the state and federal government has made significant changes in increasing access to healthcare for COFA communities. SB 1538 helps fill in gaps where some members still do not have access to dental services.

Dental health is an important part of overall health. Oral health impacts more than an individual's teeth, it has wide-ranging consequences for physical health and quality of life. This bill will provide dental care to low-income citizens of Pacific Island countries with Compacts of Free Association who reside in Oregon and lack access to affordable dental because they do not qualify for Medicaid. Oral health impacts more than an individual's teeth, it has wide-ranging consequences for physical health and quality of life.

Please support SB 1538 to help ensure all low-income members of the COFA community can access dental health services.