

## SB 856 STAFF MEASURE SUMMARY

### Senate Committee On Human Services

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**Meeting Dates:** 2/27

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#### WHAT THE MEASURE DOES:

Establishes the Compact of Free Association (COFA) Food Assistance Program to provide food assistance to COFA citizens who would qualify for Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program benefits but for their immigration status. Specifies eligibility and directs Department of Human Services to administer program.

#### ISSUES DISCUSSED:

##### EFFECT OF AMENDMENT:

No amendment.

##### BACKGROUND:

The United States Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) provides food benefits and education on food preparation and nutrition to low-income households. According to the USDA, only U.S. citizens and certain lawfully-present non-citizens may receive SNAP benefits. [Non-citizens who are eligible](#) based on their immigration status must also meet other SNAP eligibility requirements such as income and resource limits. There are two categories of immigrants for federal benefits eligibility purposes: "qualified" and "not qualified." The "qualified" immigrant category includes:

- refugees, people granted asylum or withholding of deportation/removal, and conditional entrants;
- people granted parole by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) for a period of at least one year;
- Cuban and Haitian entrants;
- certain abused immigrants, their children, and/or their parents;
- certain survivors of trafficking; and
- individuals residing in the U.S. pursuant to a Compact of Free Association (COFA), for Medicaid purposes only (8 U.S.C. § 1641(b)(8)).

All other immigrants, including undocumented immigrants, as well as many people who are lawfully present in the U.S., are considered "not qualified."

The Compact of Free Association (COFA) citizens come from the Federated States of Micronesia, the Republic of the Marshall Islands, and the Republic of Palau. The Compact allows COFA citizens to freely travel, live and work in the country without a visa and with no time restraints. COFA citizens are currently not eligible for SNAP benefits. More than 94,000 COFA citizens live and work in the United States and Oregon is home to a the third largest population of COFA citizens on mainland states (about 4300), according to Census Bureau [data](#).

Senate Bill 856 will provide food assistance to COFA citizens who would qualify for Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program benefits but for their immigration status.