



Oregon Marshallese Community Association
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March 21, 2023

Testimony to Support SB5525 OHA General Funds Investments

To: Members of the Senate Committee

My name for the record is Jess Gasper Jr., and I am the Executive Director of Oregon Marshallese Community Association (OMCA). OMCA is a Non-Profit Community Based Organization here in Salem. Our organization was established to assist the Marshallese Citizens, and their descendants living in Oregon.

Marshall Islands is the stomping grounds of US Nuclear Testings in the mid 40s to mid 50s. The Marshallese have been migrating to Oregon since the 1980s for education, healthcare, job opportunities, and most recently the effects of Climate change. Through the COFA Agreement between the US and Marshall Islands, this allows Marshallese to move freely and work without the requirements of a Visa or Green card.

Immigrating to a new country comes with new challenges that our people face such as racism, low paying jobs, language, cultural differences and more. OMCA has been working hard to fight for a more equitable Oregon, and to help bring healthcare access to all Oregonians such as our marginalized Marshallese community. Our Director serves on OHA's PartnerSHIP, our staff meets monthly with county health departments, and Oregon Health Authority to assist in providing an equitable solution to all Oregonians.

One of many wins for our Organization was funding that we were awarded through Public Health Equity. With the funds, our Organization was able to provide educational outreaches in language and in a culturally appropriate way. The funds provided the capacity to hire hard working Marshallese to provide resources, system navigation, OHP, wrap services, and translation during a pandemic that ravaged our community.

\$100m for CBOs such as OMCA will allow us to keep the lights on and to continue to do more and reach more for our marginalized community. OMCA stands with, and is a member partner of Community Health Equity Coalition made up of more than 80 CBOs all across the state who are collectively responding to the public health needs of more than 500,000 Oregonians.

With Respect & Gratitude,

Jess Gasper Jr.
OMCA Executive Director

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