

**SB 1518 STAFF MEASURE SUMMARY**

**Senate Committee On Veterans, Emergency Management, Federal and World Affairs**

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**Action Date:** 02/13/24

**Action:** Do pass and refer to Ways and Means by prior reference.

**Vote:** 5-0-0-0

**Yeas:** 5 - Gorsek, Linthicum, Manning Jr, Thatcher, Woods

**Fiscal:** Fiscal impact issued

**Revenue:** No revenue impact

**Prepared By:** Whitney Perez, LPRO Analyst

**Meeting Dates:** 2/8, 2/13

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**WHAT THE MEASURE DOES:**

The measure specifies that a Compact of Free Association (COFA) citizen residing in Oregon may not be denied public assistance, including Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program benefits, on the basis of the COFA citizen's immigration status. The measure defines COFA citizen for purposes of this provision.

**ISSUES DISCUSSED:**

- Welfare Reform Act of 1996
- Impact of nuclear testing on COFA citizens
- Compact of Free Association Treaty
- COFA citizens service in the US military

**EFFECT OF AMENDMENT:**

No amendment.

**BACKGROUND:**

After World War II, the United States assumed administration of the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands. The United States held this position from approximately 1947 to 1994. Presently, the United States has what is known as a "Compact of Free Association" governing relationships with the Republic of the Marshall Islands, the Federated States of Micronesia, and the Republic of Palau. Individuals from these island nations, often referred to as "Compact of Free Association" (COFA) citizens, can freely migrate, without work permits or visas, and study, live, and work in the United States. In 2022, the Legislative Assembly enacted Senate Bill 1538, which established a program providing dental coverage for low-income COFA citizens who reside in Oregon. A COFA citizen is defined in Oregon law as including a person who is a citizen of the Republic of the Marshall Islands, the Federated States of Micronesia, or the Republic of Palau.

Senate Bill 1518 specifies that a COFA citizen residing in Oregon may not be denied public assistance, including Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program benefits, on the basis of the COFA citizen's immigration status.