



Oregon

Tina Kotek, Governor

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Senate Committee on Healthcare
Chair Deb Patterson
Vice Chair Cedric Hayden

Dear Co-Chairs and Members of the Committee:

The Oregon Department of Human Services (ODHS) Self-Sufficiency Programs (SSP) submits the following testimony about SSP services and programs available for people residing in Oregon, who are originally Compacts of Free Association (COFA) citizens.

Federal law change:

On March 9, 2024, President Joseph R. Biden signed into law the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2024 (CAA) (P.L. 118-42). This change in law allowed COFA citizens residing in Oregon to be eligible for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF).

State agencies must still determine eligibility for the programs are met and part of this is the federal requirement that ODHS continue to verify the immigration status of COFA citizens through the USCIS Systematic Alien Verification for Entitlements (SAVE) program.

Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP):

(COFA) citizens of the Federated States of Micronesia, the Republic of the Marshall Islands, and the Republic of Palau who lawfully reside in the United States are now eligible for SNAP and are not subject to a waiting period. They are immediately eligible for benefits as long as they meet all other SNAP financial and non-financial eligibility requirements.

Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) clarified that any COFA citizens denied between March 9, 2024, through July 12, 2024, could either appeal their original SNAP denial or completely reapply for the program.

Oregon proactively tracked and reached out to 245 families who had been affected during that time.

In February 2025, Oregon SNAP has served:

“Assisting People to Become Independent, Healthy and Safe”

- 1,444 unique COFA families in 14 counties.
- Average benefit amount of \$501 per household.
- Over \$1.2 million SNAP dollars are issued each month to COFA families.

Access to SNAP also means that COFA families can fully engage with SNAP Employment and Training supports that can help them gain skills and find work, as well as address barriers to employment.

Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF):

Prior to the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2024 becoming law, COFA Citizen adults who received TANF for their citizen children or eligible non-citizen children could be eligible to participate in the Job Opportunity and Basic Skills (JOBS) program. The reason for this is due to having employment authorization rights in the United States. While the adults may not have received direct TANF benefits, if they had a status of JOBS eligible (mandatory) or volunteer this enabled access to JOBS support services. JOBS support services are meant to provide adults with the necessary supports to engage and participate in their Personal Development Plan (PDP) which could include activities that are focused on:

- Family Stability and well-being.
- Skills building for education and employment opportunities.
- Accept job offers and retain employment.

On March 9, 2024, COFA citizens, whose documentation was verified via SAVE, also became eligible to receive TANF benefits.

The most recent data from October 2024-February 2025 indicates:

- 267 unique COFA families received TANF.
- Average benefit amount of \$445.

Temporary Assistance for Domestic Violence Survivors (TA-DVS):

Although this program was not specifically mentioned in the CAA of 2024, it is funded by the TANF block grant. Therefore, COFA noncitizens eligible for TANF are also eligible for TA-DVS, eliminating the need to utilize a citizenship waiver.

Note: The CAA of 2024 changes do not extend to Refugee Cash Assistance (REFC) or Refugee Medical (REFM) to COFA noncitizens. There were no

changes to immigration laws for this population to access REFC and REFM program benefits.

Moving forward

The federal changes resulted in substantial program expansions for COFA citizens. ODHS is continuing to deepen outreach, provide translated forms/materials and we are working to improve our connections and engage with community members to continue to build department services.

Sincerely,

Heather Miles

SNAP Policy and Program Manager