

## Testimony in Support of Senate Bill 442

Chair Patterson, Vice Chair Hayden, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Shimiko Montgomery. Some background on me, I am Marshallese-American. I was born in the Marshall Islands and have lived and worked across Micronesia throughout my life. I moved to Bend 12 years ago and in 2019 was elected to serve a 4 year term on the Bend-La Pine School Board and, in 2022, I was appointed to serve on our State Board of Education where I currently serve as the Vice Chair. I also used to be the Executive Director of the Central Oregon Health Quality Alliance, a nonprofit that funds innovative projects to improve health care in Central Oregon. I have also held an appointed position for three years on OHA's Metrics and Scoring Committee that determines metrics to assess health care delivery in this state. As an active member of the COFA community and someone who is deeply involved in Oregon policy making, I am here to urge your support for SB 442.

To comply with the Compact of Free Association that provides benefits to COFA citizens, OHA and DHS have worked diligently with the resources they have to serve our communities. I am here, along with COFA community leaders from across our state, to tell you that these efforts are not sufficient. The US Government Accountability Office shows that COFA populations in the US have grown by about 70% between 2010 and 2020. Anecdotally, this is an ongoing trend we are seeing across the US. Oregon ranks 4<sup>th</sup> in states with the largest COFA populations behind Hawaii, Washington, and Arkansas. The system we have in place to serve this growing community and their unique needs to comply with this unique treaty needs to be updated and SB 442 is a community driven proposal to address this issue.

To highlight just how poorly health care services are being accessed by COFA populations, I pulled data from the 2023 OHA CCO Metrics Dashboard (<https://visual-data.dhsoha.state.or.us/t/OHA/views/CCOPerformanceMetrics/welcome?%3Aembed=y&%3AisGuestRedirectFromVizportal=y>), For well-child visits for infants under 15 months, the highest rate for any group of CCO members was 66.3%, yet Micronesians ranked second to last at 29.1%. For well-care visits for children ages 7 to 17, the highest rate was 57.8%, while Marshallese and other Micronesians were the two lowest ranked groups at 32.9% and 27.8% respectively. And for adults with diabetes receiving dental evaluations, the highest rate was 38.9%, while Marshallese were last at just 11.3%. These are just a few examples of how deep the disparities run in health care access in Oregon.

These numbers show that the system is failing us. And while these gaps in care are troubling, they are not inevitable. You have the power to change this. Passing SB 442 is an opportunity to honor the promises made to our people, to ensure that Marshallese and

other COFA citizens living in Oregon receive the services they need, and be proactive in creating a system that is prepared for continued COFA population growth.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Shimiko Montgomery