

Testimony of Rev. Sekap Esah, Nu'uaniu Baptist Church, Micronesian Ministry**Relating to Assisting Persons Under a Compact of Free Association**

Micronesians United supports the recommendation of the Micronesian Task Force which was established by Senate Resolution No. 142, S.D. 1, Session Laws of Hawaii 2007.

The key word in the recommendation is 'self-sufficiency.' Micronesians can empower themselves to become self-sufficient in Hawaii. In order for self-sufficiency to take place, it is important to implement partnerships among government agencies, community-based organizations, churches, and the grassroots people from the Federated States of Micronesia and the Republic of the Marshall Islands.

Please add the word 'churches' and 'grassroots people of the Micronesian states' to line 15 of the proposed bill for an Act.

It might also be useful to call for 'focus groups' from the various Micronesian communities to come up with concrete ideas of how to implement this self-sufficiency initiative. It is important to hear from the grassroots communities and get recommendations from them for the implementation of a self-sufficiency program. It would be a good step to involve our Micronesian communities in the democratic process here in Hawaii to support this proposed bill at the various hearings before the Senate and the House.

Thank you for your consideration of this request.

Testimony by: Jocelyn Howard

Late

To: Committee on Human Services and Public Housing

Date of Hearing: 1/28/08

Time of Hearing: 2:45pm

Place of Hearing: Conference Room 224, Stat Capitol, 415 Beretania St.

Today, I am here to support bill SB 2513: Relating to assisting Person under a compact of free Association. There is a great need to create a position for a coordinator with in the department of labor and industrial relations to assist individuals present in Hawaii under various Compacts of Free Association Treaty with the United States of America to coordinate services and appropriations made for these populations, as the number of COFA migrants and their needs will increase in the coming months and years.

I moved to Hawaii in 1989 to continue my education at the University of Hawaii at Hilo. My goal was to study, obtain my degree and return to my home the Federated States of Micronesia to work and help the people of my country. I graduated in 1996 and moved to Oahu. I found myself helping relatives and friends with their medical, and health, and financial needs during my first 4 years living on Oahu because of their limited English, acculturation skills, and knowledge about the medical, health, and human services programs. Each time I went to the Medical and Health clinics, and welfare offices, I noticed more and more new Micronesian faces on the Island. I observed the same with the neighboring islands, especially Maui and the Big Island. In 2001, I began working for the Department of Education, and helped Micronesian families, and noticed a trend, "one will come here for medical, and bring his or her family members later on". The same came true for me in 2002 when my only sister got sick, and she was diagnosed with Leukemia back in Chuuk. I helped her come to Hawaii to get better medical treatment. The doctors in Hawaii diagnosed her with renal failure, both kidneys, instead of cancer, the news was great but the reality of the news was life changing. She could not go back to Chuuk because there are no dialysis machines. She was immediately put on dialysis, 3 days a week and 4 hours per week. Today, her husband and 5 children are here with her, working and going to school. This story is true to many Micronesian families moving to Hawaii. This story would not come true for me and many other Micronesian families that are needy if it wasn't for the Compact of Free Association Treaty that our Governments have with the United States of America. In-fact the "Free Association Treaty, had made it possible for my family and I to come to Hawaii, and live in Hawaii, as residents. According to Census 2000, there were 15,000 COFA citizens living in Hawaii. Today that number may have tripled. This Migration movement had impacted the State of Hawaii last year 2007 when the state spent up to 91 million dollars on services to Micronesians like my sister and her family. The US federal government appropriated 10 million dollars for COFA citizens living abroad, Hawaii, Guam, Saipan, and Samoa. With the prediction that increase in number of COFA migrants to Hawaii will continue as long as the Compact of Free Association Treaty exist, I'm often concerned about the coordination of services and appropriations for us State Wide. I am relieved to learn about bill SB-2513, because with the passing of this bill my questions and concerns and many other issues will be taken care of.

Lastly, on behalf of myself and fellow countrymen, I would like to express our sincere MAHALO, to the people of the State of Hawaii and its people for being the most welcoming, caring, and loving people and State to us. With the installment of necessary "tools" our relationship will continue to flourish.