

HCR 158

Date of Hearing: April 27, 2009

Committee: Senate Transportation,  
International and  
Intergovernmental Affairs

Department: Education

Person Testifying: Patricia Hamamoto, Superintendent of Education

Title: H.C.R. No. 158 (HSCR 1808), Provide Additional Federal Aid to the State of Hawaii for the Provision of Various State Services to Migrants from the Compact of Free Association nations.

Purpose: Strongly urging the United States Department of the Interior and the United States Congress to provide additional federal aid to the State of Hawaii for the provision of various state services to migrants from the Compact of Free Association nations.

Department's Position: The Department of Education (Department) supports H.C.R. No. 158 (HSCR 1808), as the number of students from the Compact of Free Association (COFA) nations has grown tremendously in recent years. The Department's cost associated with supporting the instructional and student support needs of these students (e.g., English Language Learner (ELL) Program support), far exceeds other state agencies' costs and is listed at \$53,586,627. Further, the Department no longer receives Compact of Freely Associated States funds.

The Department appreciates the support and foresight of the Legislature to assist in its efforts by requesting additional funding

to support this growing population of students, e.g., Micronesian students in the ELL program alone have grown from about 1,000 students in school year 1997-98 to more than 3,600 in 2008-09. The Department would also like to build upon and continue to provide support to COFA students via the various other programs that these students may qualify for, e.g., under McKinney Vento, and/or migrant education.



## HAWAII GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEES ASSOCIATION

AFSCME Local 152, AFL-CIO

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The Twenty-Fifth Legislature, State of Hawaii  
Hawaii State Senate  
Committee on Transportation and Intergovernmental Affairs

Testimony by  
Hawaii Government Employees Association  
April 27, 2009

**H.C.R. 158 - STRONGLY URGING  
THE U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE  
INTERIOR AND THE UNITED STATES  
CONGRESS TO PROVIDE ADDITIONAL  
FEDERAL AID TO THE STATE OF  
HAWAII FOR THE PROVISION OF  
VARIOUS STATE SERVICES TO  
MIGRANTS FROM THE COMPACT  
OF FREE ASSOCIATION NATIONS**

The Hawaii Government Employees Association strongly supports the purpose and intent of H.C.R 158. This concurrent resolution urges Congress to pass legislation, which would reduce the financial costs incurred by the State of Hawaii under the Compact of Free Association (COFA).

Under separate COFAs with the Federated States of Micronesia, the Republic of the Marshall Islands and the Republic of Palau, people can travel freely to work and reside in the United States without limitation. Many COFA migrants come to Hawaii with serious medical conditions, and many need financial and housing assistance.

When the compacts were executed, Congress realized there could be a significant effect on the states where COFA citizens migrated. It was the intent of Congress that these compacts would not have detrimental consequences on the states and localities where they settled. Unfortunately, the State of Hawaii has reported increasing costs each year for services provided to COFA migrants. The federal government does not reimburse these costs at an adequate level.

The economic and social impact of state benefits paid to resident COFA migrants is very significant to Hawaii. For example, in 2006 the cost reported by state agencies to provide services to COFA migrants was more than \$91 million, while federal assistance was approximately \$10.6 million. In 2007, the State of Hawaii spent in excess of \$101 million for services to this population. The State should not have to spend \$80 million

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or more to address these problems because the federal government is not paying its fair share.

To alleviate the reimbursement problem, we support Congress amending the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996 to allow COFA migrants to once again receive federally funded financial and medical assistance. Considering Hawaii's limited resources in the midst of a serious recession, it is particularly important that the federal government offset the actual costs of migration.

We appreciate the opportunity to speak in support of H.C.R. 158.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Nora A. Nomura". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first letters of the first and last names being capitalized and prominent.

Nora A. Nomura  
Deputy Executive Director