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LATE

March 17, 2019

TO: The Honorable Senator Russell E. Ruderman, Chair
Senate Committee on Human Services

FROM: Pankaj Bhanot, Director

SUBJECT: **SCR 201/SR 161 – URGING THE DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES TO CREATE
A COMPACT OF FREE ASSOCIATION ADVISORY BODY**

Hearing: March 18, 2019, 2:50 p.m.
Conference Room 016, State Capitol

DEPARTMENT'S POSITION: The Department of Human Services (DHS) supports SCR 201 and SR 161.

PURPOSE: The purpose of SCR 201 and SR 161 is to urge DHS to create a Compact of Free Association (COFA) Advisory Board to make recommendations on different aspects of health care coverage for COFA residents.

DHS recognizes the unique circumstances our community members from the Republic of the Marshall Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, and the Republic of Palau face while navigating their way through systems of care that can struggle to meet their needs, particularly in the areas of health insurance and health care. Beginning in 2015, DHS's Med-QUEST Division (MQD) has facilitated a COFA Stakeholder meeting to provide a forum for ongoing dialog between health providers, COFA community leaders, outreach workers called "kokua," health insurers and members of Hawaii's congressional delegation. We believe that this informal group may serve as a foundation for the establishment of the more formal advisory body that is called for in these resolutions. We look forward to the continued dialog and co-created solution building that will come from this body.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

AN EQUAL OPPORTUNITY AGENCY

SR-161

Submitted on: 3/16/2019 6:21:12 PM

Testimony for HMS on 3/18/2019 2:50:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Lea Minton	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

I strongly support this resolution as we need Medicaid coverage for COFA residents. An advisory committee assisting in Hawaii appropriately setting up services is a good step.



Dr. Vidalino S. Raatior

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To: Senator Russell E. Ruderman, Chair
Senator Karl Rhoads, Vice Chair
Senate Committee on Human Services

From: Dr. Vidalino S. Raatior

RE: Support for SCR 201 and SR 161, Urging the Department of Human Services to Create a Compact of Free Association (COFA) Advisory Body

Hearing: Monday, March 18, 2019, 2:50 pm, Conference Room 016

It is an honor to write this testimonial in strong support of the identical resolutions --- SCR 201 and SR 161 "Urging the Department of Human Services to Create a Compact of Free Association Advisory Body." As a Micronesian educator and Pacific focused education consultant who spent six years working in the University of Hawaii system to support the success of Micronesian and other Pacific Islander students attending schools in Hawai'i, I feel this is much needed step in the just direction. It provides a formal way for those who provide much needed services for my Micronesian community to be accountable for providing equitable services for our people. Perhaps it is also a way for our Micronesian leaders to be part of the conversations.

It has been a painful journey for many Micronesians who arrived in the Hawaiian islands since the COFA Treaty was ratified by the US Congress and signed by President Reagan in 1986. We come from Pacific cultures where hospitality is an important cultural tradition particularly for visitors to our respective islands. We expect that same hospitality in the great state of Hawaii, home of the Aloha Spirit. Sadly, I have researched, witnessed, and felt the pain of racial discrimination against Micronesians and even American citizens born of Micronesian parents. That sadness runs deep for those of us who are related in blood to the late Papa Mau Piailug who joined our indigenous communities together through his sharing of our sacred knowledge of wayfinding to the Hawaiian people. I hope that this COFA Advisory Body would become an embodiment of Papa Mau's "stick" that has already been laid between our peoples and the ocean we all share.

I know healthcare will be an important work for this proposed COFA Advisory Body. But equally important will be the message such a body will communicate to the future generations of Micronesians in the Rainbow State...that they are as much a part of that rainbow as any law abiding, tax paying resident. After all, the success of one Micronesian in the Hawaiian islands adds to the our greater success as a Hawaiian Ohana.

Mahalo! Killisou! Kamagar! Kalahngan! Kulo! Sa Hachichig! Kommol! Mesulang! Thank you for your support.

Dina Shek
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To: Senator Russell E. Ruderman, Chair
Senator Karl Rhoads, Vice Chair
Senate Committee on Human Services

From: Dina Shek

Hearing: Monday, March 18, 2019, 2:50 p.m., Conference Room 016

RE: Support for SCR 201 and SR 161, Urging the Department of Human Services to Create a Compact of Free Association Advisory Body

I write in strong support of SCR 201 and SR 161, resolutions “Urging the Department of Human Services to Create a Compact of Free Association Advisory Body.” This resolution would promote equal treatment for Hawai‘i residents legally present under the Compact of Free Association (COFA). COFA residents have lived, worked, and contributed to Hawai‘i’s community and economy for over three decades, and they should be afforded the same access to healthcare as other Hawai‘i residents.

Since 1996 and the implementation of the Welfare Reform Act,¹ COFA residents have been excluded from federal Medicaid and other benefits, despite contributing to local, state, and federal taxes that cover benefits for others. Over the last decade, COFA residents in Hawai‘i have been subjected to devastating healthcare cuts and been forced to navigate inconsistent and confusing systems. This has led to devastating health outcomes that affect us all as neighbors and community members. SCR 201 and SR 161 are critical steps towards correcting this unfairness.

As states like Oregon and Washington commit to meaningful and justice-oriented solutions to providing consistent healthcare for COFA residents in their states, Hawai‘i must do the same. Ensuring access to healthcare coverage for all Hawai‘i’s residents benefits us all and promotes justice and fairness for Hawai‘i’s COFA residents, workers, parents, caregivers, and valued neighbors. For these reasons, **please support the passage of SCR 201 and SR 161.**

Thank you for your attention and consideration of this important matter.

¹ The Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996, Pub. L. No. 104-193, 110 Stat. 2105.