



**HAWAI'I**  
STATE FOUNDATION on  
CULTURE and the ARTS

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**TESTIMONY OF THE STATE FOUNDATION ON CULTURE AND THE ARTS  
TO THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON CULTURE, ARTS & INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS  
Wednesday, April 7, 2021 at 10:00 a.m. CR 329 via Videoconference  
S.C.R. 215 SD1**

**RECOGNIZING THE CONTRIBUTIONS OF THE COMPACT OF FREE ASSOCIATION  
COMMUNITY IN THE STATE OF HAWAII**

Chair Gates and members of the Committee, the State Foundation on Culture and the Arts (SFCA), offers **COMMENTS** on S.C.R. 215 SD1.

S.C.R. 215 SD1 proposes that the Hawai'i State Foundation on Culture and the Arts research contributions made to the State by COFA migrants and submit a report of its findings to the Legislature no later than forty days prior to the convening of the Regular Session of 2022.

SFCA does not collect data on COFA, nor are we included in any of the work or conversations referenced, i.e. healthcare, military service, housing, education, employment, economic activities, labor and taxes. How is the State Foundation on Culture and the Arts the appropriate agency to research and determine the contributions of COFA migrants to the State of Hawaii? SFCA does support cultural work in COFA communities and could report on our work, yet the request in S.C.R. 215 SD1 is much broader and would require expertise outside of our purview.

The Compacts of Free Association Task Force, 2007 (to 2009) Pursuant to S.C.R. 142, SD1 was convened by the Attorney General ([link to final report https://ag.hawaii.gov/wp-content/uploads/2013/01/cofa.pdf](https://ag.hawaii.gov/wp-content/uploads/2013/01/cofa.pdf)) and included the following members:

- (1) The Department of Health;
- (2) The Department of Human Services;
- (3) The Department of Education;
- (4) The Department of Labor and Industrial Relations;
- (5) The University of Hawaii - Manoa, John A. Burns School of Medicine;
- (6) The Micronesian Community Network;
- (7) Micronesians United;
- (8) The Institute for Human Services; and
- (9) The University of Hawaii - West Oahu.

In addition to the members designated pursuant to S.C.R. 142 SD1, the task force included the participation of other public and private agencies, and individuals who have an interest or expertise in the issues, including but not limited to (in no particular order) representatives from:

- (1) Offices of the members of Hawaii's Congressional delegation;
- (2) Members of the State Legislature;
- (3) The Government of the Federated States of Micronesia;
- (4) The Government of the Republic of the Marshall Islands;
- (5) The Government of the Republic of Palau;
- (6) The U. S. Department of the Interior, Office of Insular Affairs;

- (7) The State of Hawaii Judiciary, Office of Equality and Access to the Courts;
- (8) The Nations of Micronesia Health Committee;
- (9) The East-West Center;
- (10) Central Union Church;
- (11) The Legal Aid Society of Hawaii;
- (12) The Hawaii Public Housing Authority;
- (13) Catholic Charities Hawaii;
- (14) The City and County of Honolulu, Department of Community Services;
- (15) The University of Hawaii - Manoa;
- (16) The Pacific Island Health Officers Association;
- (17) Waianae Community Outreach;
- (18) The State Office of Language Access;
- (19) The U.S. Department of Homeland Security;
- (20) The Ethnic Education Foundation;
- (21) The State Department of the Attorney General;
- (22) The U.S. Public Health Service;
- (23) The U.S. Centers for Disease Control & Prevention;
- (24) The Pacific Islander American Health Forum;
- (25) Shriner's Hospital;
- (26) Goodwill Industries, Hawaii;
- (27) Family Promise of Hawaii;
- (28) Trinity Church-Central Oahu;
- (29) The Hawai'i Disability Rights Center; and
- (30) Private members of the community without group affiliation.

There is more than a cultural contribution component to the issue of addressing COFA migrants in the Hawaii community, which should involve a wide circle of participants.

To facilitate an effective outcome, the State Foundation proposes the following recommendations:

- Request the Lead agency be changed from the State Foundation on Culture and the Arts to an agency with data and reporting expertise to evaluate:
  - The reasons for the negative public perception of COFA migrants and the establishment of programs to address the negative perceptions;
  - Solutions for the discrimination problems faced by COFA migrants in housing, education, and employment; and
  - The contributions made by COFA migrants to the State of Hawaii.

The State Foundation on Culture and the Arts welcomes the opportunity to lend our expertise to recognize the contributions and accomplishments of the COFA community in Hawaii.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony on this matter.



## Young Democrats of Hawai'i

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**April 7, 2021**

**House Committee on Corrections, Military, & Veterans**

**Aloha Chair Ohno, Vice-Chair Ganaden, and Members of the Committees:**

The Young Democrats of Hawai'i (YDHI) **supports SCR215 SD1**, which would recognize the contributions of the Compacts of Free Association (COFA) community in the State of Hawai'i. It would also acknowledge that Hawai'i residents with ties to the three countries with compacts of free association with the United States – the Federated States of Micronesia (FSM), the Republic of the Marshall Islands (RMI), and the Republic of Palau (ROP) – not only represent a vast region with strategic importance to the United States, but also make important contributions to the State of Hawai'i.

YDHI is a caucus under the Democratic Party of Hawai'i. Our mission is to increase the political strength of our members by providing opportunities for civic engagement, political advocacy, and participation in the Democratic Party of Hawai'i.

In 2020, our membership established our top three legislative priorities, voting to advocate for affordable housing, healthcare, and the economy.

We support SCR215 SD1 because COFA migrants face discrimination in access to housing, education, and employment while being scapegoated as a drain on resources, particularly regarding healthcare. This cost-focused narrative fails to consider the ways COFA migrants contribute to the State of Hawai'i. This resolution would highlight a few of these important contributions:

- COFA migrants contribute to the vibrancy of indigenous cultural practices, helping to keep native cultural traditions alive;
- Citizens of COFA countries volunteer to serve in the United States Armed Forces at per capita rates higher than most states;
- COFA migrants contributed \$366,200,000 to Hawai'i gross domestic product in 2017; and
- Citizens of COFA nations represent a vast region in the Pacific that is incredibly strategic to the United States.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of this resolution, and we urge you to pass SCR215 SD1 to create the vibrant economy our membership desires and deserves.

Sincerely,  
The Young Democrats of Hawai'i

# Native Hawaiian & Pacific Islander



**HAWAI'I  
COVID-19**

**Response Recovery Resilience**

**TEAM**

**HOUSE COMMITTEE ON CULTURE, ARTS, & INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS**

Rep. Cedric A. Gates, Chair

Rep. Matthew S. LoPresti, Vice-Chair

## IN SUPPORT

**SCR 215 - RECOGNIZING THE CONTRIBUTIONS OF THE COMPACT OF FREE  
ASSOCIATION COMMUNITY IN THE STATE OF HAWAII.**

**Wednesday, April 7, 2021, Conference Room 329 via videoconference**

Aloha Chair Gates, Vice-Chair LoPresti, and Members of the House Committee on Culture, Arts, & International Affairs:

The Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander Hawai'i COVID-19 Response, Recovery and Resilience (NHPI 3R) Team **SUPPORTS** SCR215.

With gratitude for the gift that Pius Mau Piailug of Satawal, Yap gave to the world by re-teaching Kānaka Maoli the art of wayfinding, we wholeheartedly support the opportunity to celebrate the peoples and the culture of the western Pacific and the relationships between Native Hawaiians and Pacific Islanders. Recognition of the vibrant and diverse cultures, the history of shared traditional knowledge, and especially the colonial practices and policies that forced so many Micronesians out of their homelands is long overdue.

The NHPI 3R Team was established in May 2020, in alignment with the national NHPI Response Team, to improve the collection and reporting of accurate data, identify and lend support to initiatives across the Hawaiian Islands working to address COVID-19 among Native Hawaiians and Pacific Islanders, and unify to establish a presence in the decision-making processes and policies that impact our communities. The NHPI 3R Team is a collective of more than sixty organizations that directly serve in Hawai'i's Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander (NHPI)<sup>1</sup> communities, which comprise at least twenty-five percent of the population of the State of Hawai'i<sup>2</sup>. For nearly a year, team stakeholders have identified priorities around COVID-19

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<sup>1</sup> We define "Native Hawaiian" using the terminology from the Native Hawaiian Health Care Improvement Act, which indicates that Native Hawaiians are a "distinct and unique indigenous people with a historical continuity to the original inhabitants of the Hawaiian archipelago whose society was organized as a Nation prior to the arrival of the first nonindigenous people in 1778" (42 USC § 11701(1)) and Pacific Islanders as the distinct and unique indigenous peoples descended from the original inhabitants of the nations within Oceania. Together, "Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander" or "NHPI" refers to dozens of distinct peoples, languages, and cultures, all of which we recognize as important voices.

<sup>2</sup> Critical and important reference is due to recognizing, acknowledging, and acting on the State of Hawai'i's, and more broadly the United States of America's, promises made to the NHPI communities. Our historical trauma as being part of the

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related policies, social services, outreach and communications, research and other activities within the State and counties. The NHPI 3R Team has worked in collaboration with more than 60 agencies, organizations, and offices throughout the COVID-19 pandemic to be responsive to the needs of Hawai'i's NHPI communities that have been disproportionately impacted by this pandemic.

It is past time to acknowledge the Compacts of Free Association that provide a path for citizens of the Federated States of Micronesia and republics of Belau (Palau) and Marshall Islands to enter Hawai'i and the continental United States. The contributions of COFA citizens who reside in Hawai'i and throughout the continental United States are contributions that benefit United States citizens and residents alike. It is disturbing that COFA citizens in Hawai'i face both structural barriers to equal rights as well as active discrimination that negatively impacts them<sup>3,4,5</sup>.

Thus, the NHPI 3R Team supports the intent of this measure to actively respond to these circumstances of inequity in a constructive and positive manner by celebrating all of the achievements and contributions of communities that are included under the umbrella of "COFA citizens": Chuukese, Kosraean, Pohnpeian, Yapese, Marshallese, and Palauan. Though no group should need to justify a right to exist in Hawai'i, the action of the Legislature to recognize and celebrate the many contributions of COFA citizens demonstrates the desire to pursue equity for these communities.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

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State of Hawai'i and the United State of America, has involved illegal annexation, an attempt at repatriation and to make up for wrongdoings done onto our NHPI communities. In light of this history, this further confirms the need for immediate and appropriate action to protect our NHPI communities and all of Hawai'i.

<sup>3</sup> Hawai'i Appleseed Center for Law and Economic Justice. (2011). "Broken Promises, Shattered Lives: The case for justice for Micronesians in Hawai'i." [http://www.hicore.org/media/assets/COFA\\_Report.pdf](http://www.hicore.org/media/assets/COFA_Report.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> Hawaii Advisory Committee to the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights. (2019). "Micronesians in Hawaii: Migrant Group Faces Barriers to Equal Opportunity." <https://www.usccr.gov/pubs/2019/08-13-Hawaii-Micronesian-Report.pdf>

<sup>5</sup> Inada, Megan Kiyomi et al. "Chuukese community experiences of racial discrimination and other barriers to healthcare: Perspectives from community members and providers." *Social medicine (Social Medicine Publication Group)* vol. 12,1 (2019): 3-13.



**Statement of the Democratic Party of Hawai'i  
In Support of SCR215, SD1, Recognizing the Contributions of the Compact of Free  
Association Community in the State of Hawai'i**

The [Democratic Party of Hawai'i](#) supports SCR215, SD1, Recognizing the Contributions of the Compact of Free Association (COFA) Community in the State of Hawai'i, to the extent that it aligns with our Party's [platform](#).

The Democratic Party of Hawai'i believes in justice and equality for all, and we also believe that our diversity is our greatest strength. This extends to our friends, neighbors, and 'ohana from the Republic of Palau, the Republic of the Marshall Islands, and the Federated States of Micronesia who have been an invaluable part of the fabric of our local community. We are proud that this resolution recognizes the contributions of the COFA community, and hope that it will spark efforts to further elevate, showcase, and promote their presence and visibility here in Hawai'i.

Mahalo nui for the opportunity to provide these comments in support of this important bill.

*Tyler Dos Santos-Tam  
Chairperson*

**SCR-215-SD-1**

Submitted on: 4/6/2021 2:26:37 AM

Testimony for CAI on 4/7/2021 10:00:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Present at Hearing</b>
Christy MacPherson	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

I strongly support SCR215, SD1. I have worked with members of the COFA community in Hawai`i for many years, from my time working with families in their search for housing and through advocacy and community organizing. Their contributions to our economy, educational system, culture, and society are significant and should be acknowledged and appreciated by the State of Hawai`i.

**SCR-215-SD-1**

Submitted on: 4/6/2021 8:56:01 AM

Testimony for CAI on 4/7/2021 10:00:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Present at Hearing</b>
J.R. Kealoha	Individual	Comments	No

Comments:

This resolution is incredibly problematic because it doesn't express any real or meaningful appreciation of the contributions of the COFA community. Instead, this resolution is mostly concerned with the strategic value of the COFA relationship; the implication is that we should support the COFA countries and COFA migrants so that we can use them to further our own economic/military conquests. Ironically, there is no mention of the fact that their current problems are deeply rooted in colonialism (and exacerbated by racism and apathy). At best, this resolution is ignorant and callous; at worst, it's thinly veiled racism and neo-colonialism.



**SCR-215-SD-1**

Submitted on: 4/6/2021 9:59:34 AM

Testimony for CAI on 4/7/2021 10:00:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Present at Hearing</b>
Kristen Young	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

I am happy to express my support of SCR215 to recognize the contributions of the Compact of Free Association (COFA) community in Hawai'i. I was born and raised on O'ahu and led to believe in our spirit of aloha, which I have not seen extended to our siblings from Micronesia despite their connections and contributions to the state of Hawai'i. If my perception of people from Micronesia was only based off of stereotypes and comments I've heard from the general public, I would likely not have a good impression of Micronesians. But I've been fortunate to meet and know many people from Micronesia—from adults who've spent most of their life in Micronesia and moved to Hawai'i for other opportunities to their children who've grown up in Hawai'i and call this place home.

I work with the Hawai'i Conference United Church of Christ, which is made up of many Micronesian churches, and in my time working at LĀ• na'i Union Church (made up of a large Kosraean community) and Central Union Church of Honolulu (which has an active Pohnpei Ministry), I've experienced firsthand their hospitality, the pride they have in their culture, and the joy they bring to the surrounding community.

While the COFA relationship may be a difficult one, we cannot deny its value and effects for all of the nations and people involved. Aside from the benefit to the United States, the contributions to our local economy, the hard statistics that prove the value of our relationship with COFA nations, our Micronesian sisters and brothers have much to share, including their vibrant culture, unique knowledge, musical gifts, strong family and community values, and the way they care for each other.

I have great respect and love for our Micronesian siblings and this resolution is a small way for Hawai'i to combat the negative beliefs that are widely held among us which keep us from fully appreciating the Micronesian community.

I ask that you please pass SCR215. Thank you for your consideration and the opportunity to submit testimony on this matter.