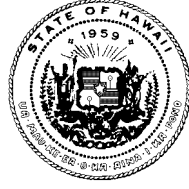


DAVID Y. IGE  
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CATHY BETTS  
DIRECTOR

JOSEPH CAMPOS II  
DEPUTY DIRECTOR

STATE OF HAWAII  
**DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES**

P. O. Box 339  
Honolulu, Hawaii 96809-0339

March 27, 2022

**TO:** The Honorable Joy A. San Buenaventura, Chair  
Committee on Human Services

**FROM:** Cathy Betts, Director

**SUBJECT: SCR180/SR173 – URGING THE DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES TO DESIGNATE TWO FULL-TIME EQUIVALENT EMPLOYEES TO ASSIST COMPACT OF FREE ASSOCIATION MIGRANTS TO ENROLL IN MEDICAID.**

**HEARING:** Tuesday, March 29, 2022, 3:00 pm  
Via Videoconference, State Capitol Conference Room 225

**DEPARTMENT'S POSITION:** The Department of Human Services (DHS) offers comments.

**PURPOSE:** SCR 180/ SR173 urges the Department of Human Services to designate two full—time equivalent (2.0 FTE) employees to assist COFA migrants to enroll in Medicaid, including establishing and implementing an outreach program to inform the COFA community in Hawai'i of the eligibility criteria and enrollment process.

The Department appreciates the intent of this resolution and agrees that Hawaii residents who are also citizens of the Republic of the Marshall Islands, the Federated States of Micronesia, and the Republic of Palau have experienced significant disruption to continuous access to health insurance coverage. The Department advocated with community members and the congressional delegation to restore Medicaid access, and we celebrate that access was restored in December of 2020. In addition, the Med-QUEST Division (MQD) was the first Medicaid program in the nation to take action to modify its eligibility system to ensure all applicants from this community would no longer experience any barrier to access based on citizenship.

MQD already maintains a Health Care Outreach Branch that consists of 6 FTE workers who work within our communities and with community-based organizations such as We Are Oceania, the Legal Aid Society of Hawaii, and others. The Health Care Outreach Branch staff conduct outreach and assist with Medicaid applications in a linguistically and culturally appropriate way. This dedicated outreach effort increases access and improves health equity.

While we appreciate there may be an assumption that there is a lag in Medicaid enrollment since the restoration of access to Medicaid for this population, we are happy to report that this is not the case. Medicaid enrollment for this community increased 85% to 11,956 as of February 2022 compared to 6,461 people enrolled in December 2020. We are grateful for the community partnerships and the depth of experience of the Health Care Outreach Branch staff who worked to enroll this community into Medicaid.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments on this resolution.

**SCR-180**

Submitted on: 3/28/2022 12:52:13 PM

Testimony for HMS on 3/29/2022 3:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
David Anitok	Testifying for COFA Alliance National Network	Support	Remotely Via Zoom

Comments:

Chair, Vice Chair and members of the HMS committee.

I urge your support on SCR180 to urge DHS to designate two culturally competent members of the Freely Association States to work as Full-Time employee to assist with enrolling and educating eligible COFA residents in the State of Hawaii to the state and federal Medicaid services. I served as a member of the community of the Marshallese and advocate for COFA migrants as I understand the unique opportunities to address the generational health disparities within the Pacific Islander communities which was exacerbated during this COVID-19 public health crisis. For three decades the state of Hawaii has struggled to address this alone until our COFA communities finally got the Congress to restore Medicaid benefit since the Major Welfare Reform Act of 1996. Please allow now a smooth transition for this services to be handled by those most culturally competent and skilled to do the work to get more residents of Hawaii state safe and healthier. Kommol tata. David Anitok