



CHILDREN'S ALLIANCE

A Voice for Washington's Children, Youth & Families

Improve Family and Community Health

Pass House Bill 1291/Senate Bill 5683

Kids do better when their parents and caregivers do better. When parents and loved ones can't get the health care they need to stay healthy, children can suffer.

For Washington kids whose families come from Pacific island nations with Compacts of Free Association with the United States, the scales are tipped unfairly toward this suffering.

House Bill 1291/Senate Bill 5683 will improve equitable access to health care by providing access to care to Washingtonians from Compact of Free Association nations who are income-eligible for Medicaid. It will provide premium assistance to purchase a health plan and coverage of out-of-pocket costs to provide the same coverage available to other Washington adults eligible for Medicaid.

Background:

Washingtonians from the Federated States of Micronesia, the Marshall Islands and Palau live and work freely in the United States through Compacts of Free Association (COFA) with the United States. The Compacts of Free Association are based on historic and current military interests in the region, including United States government nuclear weapons testing. There were 67 nuclear weapons detonations in the region, the equivalent in radiation exposure of 1.6 Hiroshima-sized weapons each day for 12 years. People from COFA nations experience the historic and current impacts from these activities, including losses of land and health.

Washingtonians from COFA nations travel freely between our nations. They work and pay taxes, and serve in the United States military in very high numbers. Despite this unique and close relationship, since 1996 people living in the United States from COFA nations have not been eligible for Medicaid.

HB 1291/SB 5683 are modeled on a successful program in Oregon which was passed by the Oregon State Legislature in 2016.

Pass and fund HB 1291/SB 5683 including coverage of out-of-pocket costs.

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