

HOUSE BILL REPORT

ESB 5274

As Passed House - Amended:

April 12, 2019

Title: An act relating to dental coverage for Pacific islanders residing in Washington.

Brief Description: Concerning dental coverage for Pacific islanders residing in Washington.

Sponsors: Senators Hasegawa, Hunt, Wilson, C., Billig, Nguyen, Conway, Das, Frockt, Keiser, Randall and Saldaña.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Appropriations: 4/3/19, 4/8/19 [DPA].

Floor Activity:

Passed House - Amended: 4/12/19, 59-36.

Brief Summary of Engrossed Bill (As Amended by House)

- Creates a dental care program for Washington residents who are citizens of the Republic of the Marshall Islands, the Federated States of Micronesia, or the Republic of Palau.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

Majority Report: Do pass as amended. Signed by 19 members: Representatives Ormsby, Chair; Bergquist, 2nd Vice Chair; Robinson, 1st Vice Chair; Cody, Dolan, Fitzgibbon, Hansen, Hudgins, Jinkins, Macri, Pettigrew, Pollet, Ryu, Senn, Springer, Stanford, Sullivan, Tarleton and Tharinger.

Minority Report: Do not pass. Signed by 13 members: Representatives Stokesbary, Ranking Minority Member; MacEwen, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Rude, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Caldier, Chandler, Dye, Hoff, Kraft, Mosbrucker, Schmick, Steele, Sutherland and Ybarra.

Staff: Catrina Lucero (786-7192).

This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not a part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.

Background:

Under the Compact of Free Association (COFA), citizens of the Republic of the Marshall Islands, the Federated States of Micronesia, and the Republic of Palau may live and work in the United States and serve in the United States military. Citizens of COFA nations are also eligible for premium assistance through the exchanges established by the ACA. Citizens of COFA nations are, however, ineligible for Medicaid.

The Legislature created the Pacific Island Citizens Health Care Premium Assistance Program (Premium Assistance Program) in 2018 to provide premium and cost sharing assistance to COFA citizens who enroll in a silver qualified health plan on the individual market, have an income less than 133 percent of the federal poverty level, and are ineligible for federal or state medical assistance programs.

Summary of Amended Bill:

The COFA Islander Dental Program (Dental Program) is established. Subject to the availability of amounts appropriated, the program must provide dental services as covered under the Medical Assistance Program to certain COFA citizens.

To be eligible for the program an individual must be eligible for the COFA Premium Assistance Program under RCW 43.71A.020 or:

- be a Washington resident;
- be a COFA citizen;
- have an income less than 133 percent of the federal poverty level; and
- be enrolled in Medicare.

The HCA may disqualify a participant if they:

- no longer meet eligibility criteria;
- fail to comply with the Dental Program procedural or documentation requirements;
- fail to notify the HCA of a change of address in a timely manner; or
- withdraw their application or request termination of coverage.

The HCA must establish:

- an application, enrollment, and renewal processes; and
- procedural requirements for participation in the Dental Program.

The HCA must begin administering the program by January 1, 2020. The HCA, in consultation with the Washington Commission on Asian Pacific American Affairs, must establish a community education and outreach program to facilitate participation in the program. Funding for the education and outreach campaign is subject to appropriations.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available. New fiscal note requested on March 14, 2019.

Effective Date of Amended Bill: The bill contains an emergency clause and takes effect immediately.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony:

(In support) The compacts with the Federated States of Micronesia, Republic of Palau, and the Marshall Islands are a result of the United States using these countries for strategic military purposes and as nuclear testing grounds. People from COFA nations work and pay taxes in Washington but do not have adequate access to dental care. Including dental coverage into the Premium Assistance Program implemented by the Legislature in 2018 will bring the state closer to offering Medicaid parity for these individuals. Oral health is an important component and determinate of overall health. Children are more likely to access dental care when their caregivers also have access to dental care. Insurance coverage increases access to preventative and restorative care, avoiding more costly care later. Pacific Islanders experience health disparities in regards to oral health outcomes. An oral health survey found that by third grade 75 percent of Pacific Islanders have tooth decay as compared to 46 percent of Caucasian third graders.

(Opposed) None.

Persons Testifying: Litonya Lester, Children's Alliance; and Alison Mondy, Arcora Foundation.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.