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**SUBSTITUTE SENATE JOINT MEMORIAL 8017**

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**State of Washington 66th Legislature 2020 Regular Session**

**By** Senate State Government, Tribal Relations & Elections (originally sponsored by Senators Hasegawa, Hunt, Billig, Saldaña, Stanford, and Wilson, C.)

TO THE HONORABLE DONALD J. TRUMP, PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES, AND TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE SENATE AND THE SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, AND TO THE SENATE AND HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE UNITED STATES, IN CONGRESS ASSEMBLED:

We, your Memorialists, the Senate and House of Representatives of the State of Washington, in legislative session assembled, respectfully represent and petition as follows:

WHEREAS, Since 1986, Compacts of Free Association (COFA) between the Republic of the Marshall Islands, the Republic of Palau, the Federated States of Micronesia (Chuuk, Kosrae, Yap, Pohnpei), and the United States allow citizens of nations with COFA agreements to serve in the United States military and enter, lawfully reside, and work in the United States; and

WHEREAS, The relationship between the nations with Compacts of Free Association and the United States includes economic development and a military presence; and

WHEREAS, The region served as a testing ground for atmospheric nuclear weapons between 1946 and 1958, which resulted in past and current inhabitants being exposed to high levels of radioactive fallout; and

WHEREAS, When the Compacts were originally signed, COFA migrants were eligible for Medicaid and other federal programs; and

WHEREAS, Despite paying state and federal taxes, these migrants were excluded from benefits as a consequence of the federal Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act in 1996; and

WHEREAS, This ineligibility for federal health programs has exacerbated barriers to health care access for this population, which has led to poorer health outcomes and increased, long-term costs on the health care system as a whole; and

WHEREAS, Research shows that people living in households in which the primary language spoken at home is not English, seniors, people with disabilities, and people who identify as Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islanders are disproportionately impacted by health inequities; and

WHEREAS, Washington state has the second-largest population of Kosraeans and the third-largest population of Palauans and Marshallese people in the United States according to the 2010 United States Census; and

WHEREAS, Washington recognized the need to help address health inequities by providing support for citizens of nations with COFA agreements in need of food, medical, and dental care assistance in Washington state; and

WHEREAS, Washington state continues to advocate, alongside other states, for congressional legislation to restore federal benefits for COFA communities who continue to provide military service at higher rates than the overall population of the United States and valuable economic and cultural contributions in the United States; and

WHEREAS, The COFA communities in Washington are engaged in providing feedback regarding COFA renewal and participated in listening sessions as part of the recent United States Government Accountability Office study of COFA migrants in the United States in the fall of 2019;

NOW, THEREFORE, Your Memorialists respectfully request that Congress take the appropriate steps to: Restore federal benefits for COFA migrants, the including Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program and Medicaid; ensure that citizens of nations with COFA agreements are appropriately counted as part of the 2020 census; consider the uniqueness of COFA status in all immigration policies, including exempting citizens of nations with COFA agreements from changes to the public charge rules; and immediately begin work on COFA renewal negotiations.

BE IT RESOLVED, That copies of this Memorial be immediately transmitted to the Honorable Donald J. Trump, President of the United States, the President of the United States Senate, the Speaker of the House of Representatives, and each member of Congress from the State of Washington.