

## COFA EQUITY Bills 2021 Legislative Session COFA Alliance National Network

**SB 706-** The COFA Medicaid Outreach bill requests 2 multilingual, multicultural FTE's for the Oregon Health Authority (OHA). It also requests a \$300,000 grant to an organization that has experience in reaching and supporting the Medicaid eligible COFA citizens in their household locations in order to effectively complete the Medicaid application process. The organization must have experience in administering grants that utilize COFA lingual and culturally competent staff. This bill is essential in order to reach all eligible COFA citizens in the state of Oregon for Medicaid. Without this bill, there will be many eligible persons that will not receive any medical services, perhaps as many as 30 to 50 percent as most COFA citizens have never heard of Medicaid and will not be able to negotiate the application / enrollment processes due to language, access issues and/or mobility handicaps.

**SB 553-** The COFA/Refugee Equity Tuition bill will provide in-state tuition rates for all COFA citizens and Special Immigrant Visa (SIV) refugees in Oregon Higher Education Colleges and Universities. It is estimated that it may impact 100 COFA students and 10 or fewer refugee students. The bill will significantly increase the numbers of these students that reach their goal of getting a bachelor's degree or beyond. It is estimated that as low as 20% of those enrolled will be able to graduate due to the burden of paying the out of state tuition premium. While some are fortunate to receive financial aid from home, most simply have to drop out after a year or two. The Higher Education Coordinating Commission (HECC) is currently working to determine the funding mechanism for the bill such that the universities are held harmless for the negative budgetary impacts. This is especially true for Eastern Oregon University (EOU) in LaGrande, Oregon which provides a unique multicultural program for COFA students. The funding for this bill is included in the Governor's budget.

**SB-557 and HB 2557**— Essentially unanimous bills. The COFA Dental Equity Bill will provide Medicaid-level dental care for those who do not qualify for Medicaid but do qualify for the COFA Premium Assistance Program for their medical insurance. Medicaid is available to COFA citizens through age 64. The expectation is that people will transition to Medicare at the age of 65, however many if not most COFA citizens do not qualify for Medicare as they do not have the required quarterly credits (40). Those that do not qualify for Medicare, but do qualify for COFA Premium Assistance, will be able to have dental care once this bill is passed. Also those who do not qualify for Medicaid, but do qualify for Oregon Supplemental Income Program, Medical insurance would be covered for dental care.