



## Senate Committee on Judiciary

Date: Monday, March 29, 2021

Time: 9:45 a.m.

Place: Via Videoconference

**RE: SCR 215 / SR 177, RECOGNIZING THE CONTRIBUTIONS OF THE COMPACT OF FREE ASSOCIATION COMMUNITY IN THE STATE OF HAWAII.**

**Aloha Chair Rhoads, Vice Chair Keohokalole, and Members of the Committee,**

The organizations and individuals listed below **SUPPORT SCR 215 / SR 177**, recognizing the contributions of Pacific Islanders from the three nations with compacts of free association (COFA) with the United States: The Federated States of Micronesia (FSM), the Republic of the Marshall Islands (RMI), and the Republic of Palau (ROP).

We support SCR 215 / SR 177 because it counterbalances a harmful narrative that unfairly focuses on cost without much consideration of benefit. The US Government is far too wise to enter into international agreements that unfairly benefit other parties. The compacts of free association between the US and FSM, RMI, and ROP are no exception. Acknowledging the value of these agreements, the US granted citizens of these freely associated countries residency privileges in the US that rival citizenship. No other countries have such privileges.

The two million square miles of ocean that comprise FSM, RMI, and ROP serve as a bulwark against encroachment by the Chinese Communist Party in the Pacific, further insulating Hawai‘i from regional threats. Furthermore, citizens of these freely associated countries participate in the US Armed Services at greater rates per capita than most US states. However, the benefits of the compacts extend beyond national security. As SCR 215 / SR 177 explains, members of the COFA community actively contribute to the social, cultural, and economic strength of Hawai‘i. The story of Pius “Mau” Pailug and his contributions to the revitalization of traditional ocean navigation best illustrate the Pacific values and traditions that Native Hawaiians and Pacific Islanders have in common.

Despite this shared history, the COFA community represents the most recent wave of newcomers to Hawai‘i and many work entry-level jobs for local small businesses, fueling the backbone of our economy. Importantly, the COFA population generated four percent of Hawai‘i gross domestic product in 2017 while paying the same taxes and fees as all Hawai‘i residents.

For these reasons, we respectfully request that you **PASS SCR 215 / SR 177**. Mahalo for the opportunity to testify in support of this resolution.

(Please see list of supporters on the following page)

	<b>Name</b>	<b>Organization/Affiliation</b>	<b>Email Address</b>	<b>Zip Code</b>
1	Wilfred Alik, M.D	Hawaii-Marshallese Covid19 Task Force	<a href="mailto:wilfalik@gmail.com">wilfalik@gmail.com</a>	96720
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11	Keoni Williams	Hawai'i COFA Advocacy Hui	<a href="mailto:williamskeoni@gmail.com">williamskeoni@gmail.com</a>	96822

**SCR-215**

Submitted on: 3/25/2021 10:56:16 PM

Testimony for JDC on 3/29/2021 9:45:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Present at Hearing</b>
Christy MacPherson	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

I strongly support SCR215. I have worked with members of the COFA community in Hawai`i for many years, from my time working with COFA families in their search for housing and through advocacy and community organizing. Their contributions to our economy, educational system, culture, and society are significant and should be acknowledged and appreciated by the State of Hawai`i.

**SCR-215**

Submitted on: 3/27/2021 9:21:54 PM

Testimony for JDC on 3/29/2021 9:45:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Present at Hearing</b>
Daintry Bartoldus	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

As a private citizen, I am in strong support of this resolution. COFA migrants have been unfairly marginalized, even though they have made significant contributions every day to our economic vitality and national defense. Most residents have a limited understanding of the United States doing nuclear weapon testing on their islands which tragically resulted in death and disease throughout their islands. The United States deliberately fostered economic dependency in the islands to maintain strategic control over the geographic region.

It is due time we encourage and support social assimilation, bringing an end to the social shunning many COFA migrants are exposed to.

**SCR-215**

Submitted on: 3/28/2021 3:19:21 AM

Testimony for JDC on 3/29/2021 9:45:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Present at Hearing</b>
J.R. Kealoha	Individual	Oppose	No

Comments:

This resolution is incredibly problematic because it doesn't express any real or meaningful appreciation of the contributions of the COFA community. Instead, this resolution is mostly concerned with the strategic value of the COFA relationship; the implication is that we should support the COFA countries and COFA migrants so that we can use them to further our own economic/military conquests. Ironically, there is no mention of the fact that their current problems are deeply rooted in colonialism (and exacerbated by racism and apathy). At best, this resolution is ignorant and callous; at worst, it's thinly veiled racism and neo-colonialism.