SENATE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION

REQUESTING THE UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF VETERAN AFFAIRS TO TAKE CERTAIN ACTIONS TO PROVIDE COMPACT OF FREE ASSOCIATION VETERANS EQUAL QUALITY AND ACCESS TO HEALTH CARE AS VETERANS IN UNITED STATES TERRITORIES.

WHEREAS, Asian and Pacific Islanders have a long and distinguished history of military service stretching back to World War II; and

WHEREAS, Asian and Pacific Islanders have often faced discrimination in terms of recognition and veteran services upon returning home from war; and

WHEREAS, the United States entered into a Compact of Free Association (COFA) agreement with the United States Affiliated Pacific Islands of Palau, Federated States of Micronesia (Micronesia), and Republic of the Marshall Islands (the Marshall Islands) that took responsibility for protecting the territorial integrity of those nations; and

WHEREAS, the United States has vigorously recruited Pacific Islanders from the COFA nations into the United States military; and

WHEREAS, Pacific Islanders from COFA nations have served with honor in the recent Global War on Terrorism; and

WHEREAS, Pacific Islanders from United States territories like Guam and the Commonwealth of the Northern Marianas Islands receive full health benefits from the United States Department of Veteran Affairs after serving in the United States Department of Defense on their native islands, while Pacific Islanders from the COFA nations of Palau, Micronesia, and the Marshall Islands do not receive such benefits; now, therefore,
BE IT RESOLVED by the Senate of the Twenty-ninth
Legislature of the State of Hawaii, Regular Session of 2017, the
House of Representatives concurring, that the United States
Department of Veteran Affairs is requested to propose amendments
to existing laws or amend any relevant regulations to provide
COFA veterans from Palau, Micronesia, and the Marshall Islands
the same access and quality of health care as their counterparts
in Guam and the Commonwealth of Northern Marianas; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that if COFA veterans from Palau,
Micronesia, and the Marshall Islands are not provided the same
access of health care benefits by the end of fiscal year 2017,
the Department of Defense recruiters in COFA nations are
requested to inform recruits of the lack of health care benefits
after service through a signed waiver confirming informed
consent; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the United States Department of
State, United States Department of Defense, United States
Department of Health and Human Services, United States Agency
for International Development, United States Department of the
Interior's Office of Insular Affairs, and other relevant
departments and agencies are requested to develop, fund, and
implement a health care plan for Pacific Island veterans that
continues beyond the end of COFA funding in 2023 until fiscal
year 2066 or when the United States military relationship with
COFA nations expires, whichever is later; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that certified copies of this
Concurrent Resolution be transmitted to the Secretary of State,
Secretary of Defense, Secretary of Health and Human Services,
Administrator for the United States Agency for International
Development, and Assistant Secretary for Insular Areas.

OFFERED BY:

[Signatures]

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