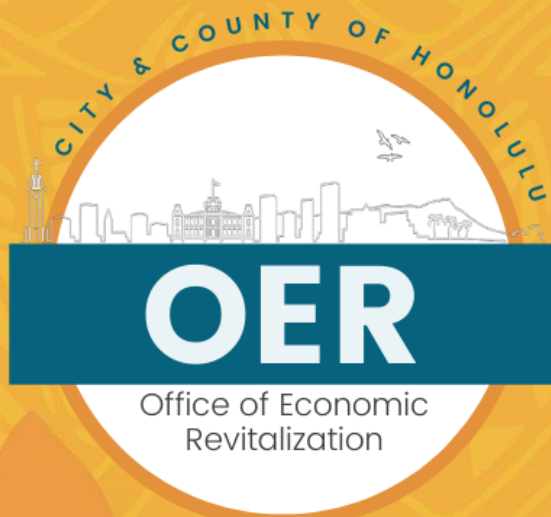


# Get to Know the Compact of Free Association (COFA)



April 6, 2023

**OFFICE OF  
ECONOMIC  
REVITALIZATION**

# WHO AM I?



# Where is Micronesia



## COFA in Micronesia

### Federated States of Micronesia (100,000 +)

- Chuuk (46,000)
- Kosrae (6,600)
- Pohnpei (36,196)
- Yap (11,377)

### Republic of the Marshall Islands (42,500)

Host of US Military Base

### Republic of Palau (18,024)



# 1. What is the COFA and who are FAS Citizens

The **Compact of Free Association** is agreement that established a special relationship between the United States and nations of:

- Federated States of Micronesia (FSM)
- Republic of the Marshall Islands (RMI)
- Republic of Palau (ROP)

The document or agreement is what is referred to as the **COFA**, the citizens or people of these countries are referred to as **citizens of the FAS**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rOIfkKqRxdE>



# Compact Provisions

## U.S. right to:

- Block other nations military activities.
- Allow U.S. exclusive access to the lands, waterways, and airspace of the FAS.
- Indefinite U.S. authority for defense and security.
- Serve in the U.S. armed forces.

## In return: FAS citizens are provided with certain immigration privileges

- Receive economic support in each country.
- To live, work, and study in the United States **indefinitely**.
- Without a visa (with reciprocal benefit for U.S. citizens entering both FSM and RMI).

**Renegotiation on economic provision ongoing  
FALSE: Immigration will Expire**



# Why do FAS citizens migrate?

1. Education
1. Employment
1. Healthcare



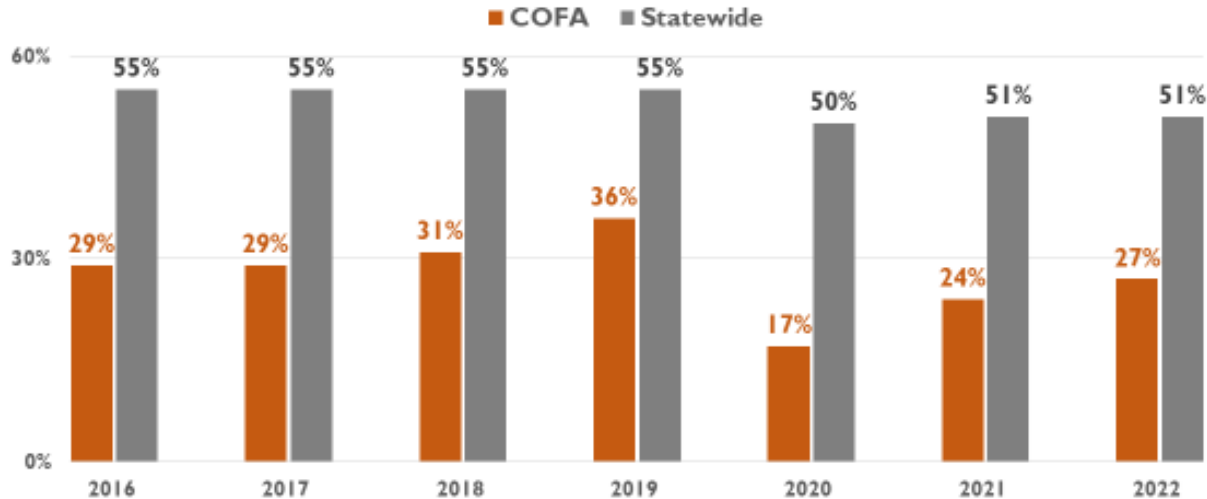
# 211 Hawaii COFA

- According to the 2020 US Census data, there are approximately 30,000 to 40,000 FAS citizens in Hawaii
- 12,000 are students in k-12
- Out of 1938 Students enrolled at UHM, 19 are COFA, 1 was in Teaching Track
- According to 2021 DBEDT data, 30% of FAS citizens are in the food service industry - to date, none are chefs (mostly prep cooks with 20 years of experience at \$25 or less per hour)



# EDUCATION Statistic

**COFA graduates are less likely to enroll in college for the first fall compared to the statewide enrollment rates.**  
(National Student Clearinghouse)





## Employment

- FAS migrants make up 1.3% of Hawaii's population
- 30% are over the age of 25 and have less than a high school diploma
- 69% are challenged with language barrier
  - high unemployment
  - significantly lower household income and high poverty (52% compared to 10% of the overall hawaii population)
  - Average income per household: \$34,121

## Medical Care

- 1996 Welfare Act removed eligibility of COFA citizens for certain federal safety
  - ONLY in December 27, 2020, Medicaid benefits restored for COFA citizens.



# COMMON CHALLENGES

## SYSTEMATIC RACISM

- Institutional Discrimination
- Racist Stereotypes and Narratives
- Oppression & Inequality
- Complexity of our Immigration Status



# What we want people to know about us

1. Everything we do, we do together
  - a. Family and community FOUNDATION
1. Trust and respect are key
  - a. Representation in leadership and decision making matters but there is a lack of representation
1. Culture runs deep- creates barrier at times
  - a. We do not advocate for ourselves because it shows  
Lack of gratitude or disrespect



# CURRENT INITIATIVES

1. Hiring of Bilingual School Home Assistants (BSHA)
2. Cultural presentation with State and City departments
3. BOE School visits
4. Host Youth Leadership Workshops
5. Host after-school sports programs
6. Hiring of Navigators to help with recruitment
7. Festival of Pacific Arts & Culture

(June 6-16, **2024**)



# What can you do to help

1. Help others understand and empathize

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=j6pmVKcRX>

Q0

1. Invite this community to participate in events
2. Encourage employers consider interpreters for onboarding to address the language gap
3. Invite us to present at educational events
4. We are here to help!





# Q & A and Engagement

1. Share one thing you learned?
2. What else should I cover?
3. Any thoughts?



# How to Say Mahalo!

- In Chuukese: "Killisou!"
- In Kosraean: "Kulo!"
- In Yapese: "Kamagar!"
- In Pohnpeian: "Kalangan!"
- In Marshallese: "Kommol Tata!"
- In Paulaun: "Sulang!"