

**RCW 43.71A.005 Findings—Intent.** (1) The legislature finds that:

(a) The compact of free association (COFA) islands, which consists of the Republic of Palau, the Republic of the Marshall Islands, and the Federated States of Micronesia, has had a long-standing relationship with the United States;

(b) The relationship between the COFA islands and the United States includes economic development and a military presence in the islands;

(c) The region served as a testing ground for atmospheric nuclear weapons between 1946 and 1957, which resulted in past and current inhabitants being exposed to nuclear fallout;

(d) Residents of the COFA islands are allowed to enter the United States without work permits or visas where they live, study, work, serve in the military, and pay state and federal taxes, but are ineligible for federal health programs like medicaid and medicare; and

(e) 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.

(2) The legislature therefore intends to increase access to health care services for COFA islanders residing in Washington by providing premium and cost-sharing assistance for health coverage purchased through the health benefit exchange. [2018 c 161 s 1.]