Oregon

John A. Kitzhaber, Governor

Oregon Commission on Asian and Pacific Islander Affairs
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Joint Ways Means, General Government Committee:
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Sen. Johnson, Sen. Whitsett, Rep. Gomberg, and Rep. Nathanson

OR Commission on Asian and Pacific Islander Affairs

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Mari Watanabe

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Legislative Liaison:
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Staff:
Lucy Baker, Administrator
Nancy Kramer, Executive Asst.

The Oregon Commission on Asian and Pacific Islander Affairs (OCAPIA) has continued to serve the State of Oregon and the Asian and Pacific Islander (API) community in meaningful and effective ways. Through our partnerships with the Governor's Office, legislators, partnerships with Oregon Advocacy Commission (OAC) Commissioners, and community organizations, OCAPIA continues to provide leadership on priority issues within our community.

OCAPIA strongly urges the support for budget funding for our two FTE OAC staff. The valuable work that our Commissioners and the work other OAC commissioners do could not be done without the support of the OAC staff. They provide the very important operational backbone of the OAC which then frees Commissioners, who already have full time jobs, to focus on the critical thinking and the execution of important policy issues.

APIs are the fastest growing racial community in the United States. Within Oregon, we are the second fastest growing just trailing behind the Hispanic community. In general, the API population is thought of as the "model minority" assumedly doing well and not in need of a lot of assistance from government sources. This is farthest from the truth. We are a community of great contrast with some of our population doing well and some struggling. Over 40% of our Pacific Islander community lives in poverty. Fifty five percent of API students in Portland Public Schools are English Language Learners (ELL) and only 28% of these ELL students graduate on-time. This is one of the lowest rates of any group. If we are to hit our state goals of 40/40/20, the work that OCAPIA leads along with our state and local government partners and community partners will be extremely important. Education reform is just one area on which the OCAPIA is focusing.

Data Collection reform (HB2134) is another important area that our community organization Asian Pacific American Network of Oregon (APANO) in partnership with OCAPIA has been pursuing through the legislature. Tuition Equity, which passed this session, voter registration

and healthcare competency are other areas of focus that OCAPIA with the support of our OAC staff play lead roles in.

Thank you for your support of the OAC budget in past years as we have proven strong outcomes for the betterment of our state. I urge your continued support the OAC budget and our two FTE staff.

Sincerely,

Mari Watanabe
Vice Chair