

Kate Brown
Governor



**Oregon Commission on
Asian and Pacific Islander Affairs**
“Advocating Equality and Diversity”
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Joint Committee on Student Success
Invited Testimony
April 2, 2019, at 5pm in Hearing Room F

Co-Chairs Roblan and Smith Warner, Co-Vice-Chairs Knopp and Smith, and members of the Committee,

For the record, my name is Bennie Moses-Mesubed and I am a member of the Oregon Commission on Asian and Pacific Islander Affairs (OCAPIA). I am also the Director of the Office of Student Diversity and Inclusion at Eastern Oregon University, in La Grande. Thank you for this opportunity to provide testimony on behalf of the 50+ races/ethnicities included under the Asian and Pacific Islander umbrella as you consider essential education investments. I will speak about the importance of high school level investments that help all students, and especially those from immigrant and refugee families become college and workforce ready.

Since 2016, OCAPIA and OCBA have been conducting policy research regarding access to career opportunities (in regards to the trades (OCBA) and licensing and re-credentialing in health related professions (OCAPIA) that have highlighted the support immigrants and refugee families need to provide them *equitable access* to education and career pathways. Oregon’s immigrant and refugee families do not come with knowledge of how to set their children up for success in the U.S. school system, but college readiness programs customized for families who do not have the privilege of knowing how to navigate the U.S. education system (such as AVID, and other such programs) help fill in some of these gaps while building empowerment and community around the student while in high school.

Programs that teach skills and provide information ranging from “soft skills” such as interview training and visiting a school, leadership development skills, organizing oneself in order to succeed in school, to family nights at school for filling out college loan and grant applications, and understanding college entrance exams, are invaluable for families and students who have no easy way of knowing where to find such help. School is a special and important part of community for these students and their families, and AVID and related programs are bridges for Oregon’s immigrant and refugee families, increasing access for those lucky enough to be a part of them. Teachers and others who are associated with these programs become valued mentors and practitioners of intercultural engagement in ways that benefit all students and serve as role models for their colleagues. We believe that investments that allow these programs in more schools, and are more accessible, especially for marginalized students, is essential to thriving, graduating, and becoming engaged Oregon citizens.

Including the rich history and contributions of all Oregonians are also central to the appointments by the Oregon Advocacy Commissions to ODE’s Ethnic Studies Advisory Group: making strides towards ensuring that all Oregonians can one day see themselves reflected in the established

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canon of history. Investments in helping develop the needed curricula and standards is an investment in success for many marginalized communities.

In my own experience, I see many students from immigrant, refugee, and other communities attending Eastern Oregon University who have come to us from their school experiences in AVID and other higher education readiness programs. Thank you for your interest in investments in such programs, which we consider essential to the success of our communities.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Bennie Moses". The signature is written in a dark ink and is positioned below the word "Sincerely,".

Bennie Moses-Mesubed, Commissioner