

**Kate Brown**  
**Governor**



**Oregon Advocacy Commissions Office**  
"Advocating Equality and Diversity"  
421 SW Oak Street, Portland, OR 97204  
O 503.302.9725  
Email: [oco.mail@oregon.gov](mailto:oco.mail@oregon.gov)

Senate Committee on Rules  
Testimony in support of SB 855  
May 13, 2019, 1 pm, Hearing Room C

Chair Senate Majority Leader Burdick, Vice-Chair Senate Minority Leader Baertschiger, and Senators Dembrow, Boquist, and Roblan:

The Oregon Commission on Asian and Pacific Islander Affairs (OCAPIA) and Oregon Commission on Hispanic Affairs (OCHA) have long standing interests in growing Oregon's diverse professional workforce. It is essential that Oregonians benefit from the inclusion of licensed and credentialed service providers from all communities, including new Oregonians. Thank you for the opportunity to support this important and inclusive bill.

Currently, an immigrant arriving in Oregon with professional credentials from their home country is required to navigate the complex path of Oregon's licensing boards themselves, creating difficulties for new Oregonians who are not proficient in English. SB 855 would take steps to address this, and increase the number of professionals who can provide services to their communities in their own languages, and also assist these professionals in achieving financial



success. OCAPIA has conducted research since 2016 on the pathways to licensure in Oregon, in partnership with Partners in Diversity, and heard stories first-hand from immigrant doctors, nurses, pharmacists and engineers who are still struggling navigating the pathways to licensure, or other ways to bring their skillset into the Oregon workforce, often in fields that have shortages of workers, but after much effort became janitors

and taxi drivers to make ends meet for their families. This kind of under-employment is common among Oregon's skilled immigrant and refugee workforce of highly skilled nurses, physicians, pharmacists, clinicians, technicians, dentists, therapists, and psychiatrists to name a few.

We have included in this testimony a few images of the 2018 graduation ceremony from PCC's Nurse Credentialing Program, where 15 skilled nurses with degrees and initial training and experience from eight countries who have taken needed coursework, and hospital based practicums and internships in order to be able to meet licensure requirements and work in their fields in Oregon. The subject of re-credentialing is complex and the inclusion in the discussion and engagement of the licensing boards have been and continue to be important to the work. SB 855 engages all of Oregon's licensing boards in this work in reasonable, helpful ways, bringing the professional sector into the discussion with other committed partners in higher education, business, and government along with a stakeholder workgroup of these partners convened regularly by OCAPIA and Partners in Diversity.



**OR Commission on Asian and Pacific Islander Affairs**

Chanpone Sinlapasai-Okamura, Chair  
David Yuen Tam, Vice Chair  
Legislative members:  
Senator Michael Dembrow  
Representative Carla Piluso

**OR Commission on Black Affairs**

Jamal Fox, Chair  
Lawanda Manning, Vice Chair  
Legislative members:  
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**OR Commission on Hispanic Affairs**

Irma Linda Castillo, Chair  
Dr. Daniel López-Cevallos, Vice Chair  
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Dr. Connie Kim-Gervey,  
Researcher/Policy Analyst

Underemployment takes a toll on society economically and socially. It limits tax revenue to federal, state, and local governments, and results in real economic losses when skills go unused. Conservative estimates of U.S. federal annual tax dollars forgone due to the underemployment of skilled immigrants exceeds \$10 billion, while Oregon state misses more than \$27 million annually.<sup>1</sup> Underemployment also limits a family's spending power, which effects their participation in the local economy. It is estimated that Oregon's loss exceeds \$272 million in terms of spending power missed due to underemployment of skilled immigrants.<sup>2</sup>

We urge you to vote yes on SB 855, to improve pathways to licensure for highly skilled immigrants.

Sincerely,



Chanpone Sinlapasai-Okamura, OCAPIA Chair



Irma Linda Castillo, OCHA Chair

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<sup>1</sup> Soto, A.R., Batalova, J., & Fix, M. (2017). *The Costs of Brain Waste among Highly Skilled Immigrants in Oregon*. Migration Policy Institute.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.