



**To:**

Senate Committee on Rules

[srules.exhibits@oregonlegislature.gov](mailto:srules.exhibits@oregonlegislature.gov)

**June 3, 2019**

Dear Chair Burdick, Vice-Chair Baertschiger, Members of the Senate Rules Committee:

I am submitting testimony on behalf of the Asian Pacific American Network of Oregon (APANO) to express our **support for House Bill 3310**, the Oregon Voting Rights Act. As a statewide, grassroots organization we work with Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders across the state of Oregon to advance social justice. We envision a just and equitable world where Asians and Pacific Islanders are fully engaged in the social, economic and political issues that affect us.

When we conducted our Statewide Listening Tour in 2017, we talked to over 80 Oregonians who identify as Asian and/or Pacific Islander. We traveled throughout Oregon -- from Portland to Beaverton, Hillsboro, Clackamas, Salem, Eugene, and Corvallis -- and found that there was a strong and universal desire to have **Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders represented at all levels of government.**

Currently, our Asian and Pacific Islander communities are woefully underrepresented and not reflected adequately in policymaking. Because race and ethnicity data about our elected officials and candidates are not collected adequately to begin with, civic groups like APANO seek to mend a gap in tracking representation. By our own count, we are only aware of 7 or so currently serving elected officials of Asian or Pacific Islander descent at any level of government, of any party, across the entire state, and merely 3 serving at the School Board level throughout Oregon.

For this Legislative Body, by broad proportional measures, Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders -- representing 6% of the state population -- should have at least three members in the 60-member House and one member in the 30-member Senate to be fully represented. But no legislators of Asian or Pacific Islander descent have served in the legislature since Senator John Lim, R-Gresham, who left in 2009. By our count, less than three have served in the entire history of the Oregon legislature.

The barriers that have made it difficult for people of color to run for local office and win are structural, rather than personal. We need good legislation, like HB 3310, to begin removing the obstacles that hinder communities of color, such as disenfranchising districts and voting systems.



Our democracy operates on the core belief that each person's vote matters, and that the choices presented to voters are both meaningful and meet the challenges at hand. The **Oregon Voting Right Act** helps instill more confidence in our representative democracy, and is therefore a powerful step in the right direction to better reflect the will of all communities in policymaking. Placing more power in the hands of people and local education jurisdictions is a reasonable measure to instill greater civic participation and self-determination. Providing the ability for members of our communities of color to seek equal opportunity to elect a candidate of their choice is an essential component of having our perspectives heard in government.

I thank you for your time and consideration, and urge the House Rules Committee to vote in support of House Bill 3310.

Sincerely,  
Robin Ye  
Political Director  
APANO