

## Testimony in Support of SB 778

Establishes Office of Immigrant and Refugee Advancement to implement and oversee statewide immigrant and refugee integration strategy.

Tuesday, March 30, 2021

Portland Japanese American Citizens League  
Submitted by Co-Presidents: Christopher Lee and Amanda Shannahan

Dear Chairman Prozanski, and members of the Senate Committee On Judiciary and Ballot Measure 110 Implementation,

We are the Co-Presidents of Portland's Japanese American Citizens League (JACL) and are submitting this testimony in support of Senate Bill 778 to Establish an Office of Immigrant and Refugee Advancement to implement and oversee statewide immigrant and refugee integration strategy.

The Portland Japanese American Citizens League (JACL) is a chapter of the oldest Asian American civil rights organization in the nation. The JACL was formed in 1929 shortly after Congress enacted the Immigration Act of 1924, which aimed at ending all Japanese immigration to the US. The roots of our organization go back to the *Issei*, the first generation of immigrants from Japan, and the *Nisei*, their children, who were the first Japanese Americans born in this country.

The Issei and Nisei faced numerous challenges in their new home. Many of those challenges were rooted in anti-Asian and anti-Immigrant sentiment, which was represented in legislation such as the Chinese Exclusion Act in 1882, The Gentlemen's Agreement in 1907, and the Immigration Act of 1924. During World War II, 120,000 of these same Issei and Nisei were forcefully incarcerated at concentration camps by the US Government.

As immigrants to this country, the Japanese American community has faced many struggles and continues to live with the trauma to this day. Despite these challenges, Japanese Americans have and continue to contribute to our communities in a multitude of ways. We are artists, farmers, educators, business owners, healthcare providers, and more. Perhaps most importantly, though, we are your friends, neighbors, and colleagues.

Our ancestors would have benefited from dedicated resources such as an Office of Immigrant and Refugee Advancement. We recommend creating one so that current and future generations of immigrants and refugees can have access to the support they need and deserve to thrive in this country and state that they have chosen to call home.

We urge the committee to support SB 778 to fund an Office of Immigrant and Refugees Advancement in the State of Oregon.

Sincerely,

*C. D. Lee*      *Amanda Shannahan*

Christopher Lee and Amanda Shannahan  
Co-Presidents, Portland JACL