



To: Oregon Senate Committee on Education
From: Wei-Wei Lou, APANO, C4 Board Chair
Lanea Olson, APANO Asian Youth Organizer
Re: Letter of Support for House Bill 2056

April 21, 2021

Dear Chair Dembrow, Vice-Chair Thomsen, and Members of the Senate Committee on Education:

As representatives of the Asian Pacific American Network of Oregon (APANO), **we would like to express our strong support for HB 2056.** APANO unites Asians and Pacific Islanders to build power, develop leaders, and advance equity through organizing, advocacy, community development, and cultural work. We are committed to a just world where Pacific Islanders and Asians and communities who share our aspirations have the power and resources to thrive.

Oregon is home to a diverse community of people, including Pacific Islander and Asian communities, with one of the highest growth rates in the state. This expanding API community means many cultures are taking root in our neighborhoods and our schools where the curriculum centers English-speaking standards. Youth who speak languages other than English are then required to take on additional coursework to complete their education in a language that they are not proficient in yet. **As our API communities know, comprehending and mastering the state standards is the goal -- language is only a tool to achieve success.**

We strongly support the replacement of "English Language Arts" with a requirement that students take four credits of language arts. This would establish statutory definition of language arts courses to include reading, writing, and other communications in a student's native or home language.

We also support the expansion of the definition of world language to include English or home language other than a student's native language. For all of the English language learners, English is their second, third, or fourth language. The ability to use English as an additional language is a demonstration that immigrant children bring in significant assets to our schools and community. It is our responsibility and obligation to honor the skill of English language learners. Deprivation of their rights to access English as a world language is discriminatory against their human rights.

To quote Dr. Mary Martinez-Wenzel: Advancing multilingual education for Oregon students makes good economic sense. Oregon students need to be prepared to thrive in

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an increasingly global economy and labor market. The demand for bilingual workers has more than doubled in recent years, and employers desire workers who speak multiple languages. Oregon has a high demand for bilingual workers compared to other states; in 2015, close to 14,000 job postings required bilingual workers (see [New American Economy, 2017](#)).

As the world becomes smaller and smaller, we are very glad to see Oregon taking the lead to create an inclusive learning environment for all students. Training multilingual Oregonians is an exciting dream for the youth of Oregon. Your leadership and advocacy is greatly appreciated.

Thank you for your time and please vote in support of HB 2056.

Sincerely,

Wei-Wei Lou, APANO C4 Board Chair
Lanea Olson, APANO Asian Youth Organizer