



KHANH PHAM
STATE REPRESENTATIVE
DISTRICT 46

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Testimony in Support for HB 2914

June 7, 2021

Chair Smith Warner, Vice Chairs Drazan and Holvey, and members of the committee,

My name is Khanh Pham, and I am the State Representative for House District 46. I'm proud to testify today in support of House Bill 2914, a bill that would enact an annual celebration of the wonderful contributions that the Arab and Arab American community have given throughout Oregon's history, and more importantly, shine a spotlight on the unique challenges facing Arab Oregonians past and present.

Arab Americans represent a broad collection of cultures and traditions and can trace roots to nearly two dozen countries across the Middle East and North Africa. This bill would honor the more than 40,000 Oregonians and 3.5 million Arab Americans living in the United States. From my work in the House Redistricting Committee and interactions with the US Census and government data collection, we know that Arab Americans face many of the same barriers for data disaggregation as many Asian American and Pacific Islander communities, as Arab Americans are often lumped under Caucasian/White demographic categories, and mistakenly confused for Muslim demographic counts. Furthermore, as racist and hateful rhetoric nationally and here in Oregon has been allowed to become mainstream and prominent, we as a State must do everything we can to uplift and support communities like the Arab American community during these dangerous times.

Celebration and recognition are powerful and important measures the State can do to make Oregon a more welcoming place. HB 2914 builds upon similar actions taken to honor the Arab American community by Multnomah County in 2021 and Portland Public Schools in 2019, and brings it statewide for all to appreciate. As the first Vietnamese-American legislator in Oregon, I ran for office because I believe that our democracy is stronger when our government represents the diversity of the communities it serves. In 1978, Oregon became the first state to elect a governor of Arab American descent, the late Vic George Atiyeh. These important histories continue to be written and must be a part of our civic discussion going forward.

I respectfully urge your support for HB 2914, a symbolic and meaningful step in the right direction for Oregon's journey towards a more diverse and equitable state.