



June 17, 2021

Re: House Bill 2914

Dear Chair and Majority Leader Wagner and Members of the Senate Rules Committee:

Thank you so much for accepting my written testimony in support of HB 2914 this afternoon. My name is Nadia Dahab. I am a Libyan American attorney, a Portland resident, and the current President of the Arab American Cultural Center of Oregon (AACCO). I write today to tell you a little about the cultural work that AACCO does, and why recognition of April as Arab Heritage Month really matters to our organization and our community.

AACCO is a nonprofit cultural center dedicated to the preservation and promotion of the culture and heritage of Oregon's diverse Arab American community. Through our cultural preservation work and our many programs and events, we aim to contribute to Oregon's cultural experience and collective prosperity.

AACCO works statewide to elevate and promote our culture and meet the needs of our community. Our Arab festival, which is our largest annual event, is a day for everyone – to celebrate the arts, culture, cuisine, and heritage of our Arab American community members. This year we held our first virtual Arab festival, but we are hoping to return to our annual live event in 2022.

This sort of work – elevating and recognizing our Arab American community members – has been particularly important in the past several years.

During the pandemic, AACCO was called upon to protect and provide for our community members in times of need.

We did so, and continue to do so, by identifying the social services our community depends on, and by partnering with others – including Multnomah County and the Oregon Food Bank – to provide access to those services.

Last year, we worked hard to make sure that Arab Americans are counted in the census and are registered and able to vote in our elections. And we are committed to continuing this work in the years to come.

Our hope is that by promoting the culture and heritage of our Arab community members, we can build relationships within and among those members, and allow our community to flourish.

Throughout history, and particularly in recent years, members of our community have been subjects of hate speech, anti-Arab rhetoric, and violence. This makes education and celebration of our history, traditions, culture, and contributions critical to growing and protecting our community, and all Oregonians. As has become clear in the past few years, the health and safety of individual community members impacts the health and safety of all Oregonians.

House Bill 2914 will help further our work, and the work of our community, substantially. I am so grateful for your consideration of this bill, and I urge you to support it.

Sincerely,

Nadia Dahab
2021 AACCO President