



February 3, 2022

Subject: Testimony in support for HB 4091 Pacific Islander Student Success Act

Dear Chair Alonso Leon and members of the House Committee on Education,

My name is Coua Xiong, my pronouns are she/her, and I am the Interim Advocacy and Civic Engagement Director at APANO. Our organization unites Asians and Pacific Islanders to build power, develop leaders, and advance equity through organizing, advocacy, community development, and cultural work. I am writing this testimony on behalf of APANO in support of HB 4091 Pacific Islander Student Success Act.

Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islanders are disproportionately impacted in many aspects including and not limited to health and education. As the data presented in the Oregon Pacific Islander Coalition's (OPIC) report shows, Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander communities have the highest rates of chronic absenteeism and lowest rates of graduation and post secondary education enrollment. Pacific Islander communities were also highly disproportionately impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, in which they stood up their own crisis response work without proper and fair investment from government agencies. Additionally, youth are left unsupported through exacerbated conditions in the school system.

Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander students and communities are most negatively impacted by the aggregation under the Asian American and Pacific Islander or "AAPI" category. Particularly in education, this aggregation results in erasure of disproportionate barriers that are specifically experienced by Pacific Islander students and not by the majority of Asian American students. **It is important to recognize that disaggregation across all Asian, Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander communities is crucial to reach equitable impact in education.**

Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander communities, and youth in particular, deserve the necessary investment to an equitable education system that will prioritize their needs in holistic and community centered methods. The creation of such an education system requires leadership and guidance from Native Hawaiian and Pacific Island community members and stakeholders.



HB 4091 will provide resources and targeted interventions to address the academic opportunity gap hurting Pacific Islander and Native Hawaiian students by creating a Pacific Islander Student Success plan. Modeled off of existing Student Success Plans for other culturally specific student groups, this plan will focus on specific solutions to unique barriers of 12,000+ Pacific Islander students in Oregon schools.

As one of the single fastest growing ethnic groups in Oregon, according to 2020 Census data, the need to address disaggregation and community specific needs in the education system is needed now more than ever. We urge you to prioritize the creation of a Pacific Islander Student Success Plan by supporting HB 4091.

Sincerely,

Coua Xiong
Interim Advocacy and Civic Engagement Director
APANO