



February 15, 2023

Re: Support for HB 3144 - Pacific Islander Student Success

Chair Neron, Vice-Chairs Hudson and Wright, and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in strong support of HB 3144, the Pacific Islander Student Success Act. My name is Jenny Lee, and I am the Deputy Director at the Coalition of Communities of Color, an alliance of culturally specific community-based organizations dedicated to collective action for racial justice.

Communities of color are experts in their own experience and must co-lead in policy development and implementation, including identifying the best strategies to meet their needs and achieve their priorities. The Coalition of Communities of Color was formed over twenty years ago to advocate for culturally specific services so that *every* community could secure the resources that they need to thrive. Over the years, we have seen the success of this approach across sectors, including education, and now we must take action for Pacific Islander students.

The disparate educational outcomes for Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander (NHPI) students show that we must move with urgency and identify concrete strategies to end these disparities. When any group of students experiences lower educational outcomes, this demonstrates the system has failed to adequately take their experiences and needs into account. Culturally specific interventions are essential to meet the diverse needs of students. We know that systems and institutions were not originally designed to meet the needs of communities of color—but they will be stronger when we reshape them to incorporate culturally specific strategies. Just as we have passed legislation for the creation of plans designed to support the achievement of Black, Native American, and Latinx students, we must continue to develop effective educational strategies that work for students from every cultural community and dedicate the resources needed.

As our state develops culturally specific interventions for NHPI students, data must be disaggregated to correspond with how community members self-identify, including thoughtfully disaggregating the range of ethnic and cultural identities that are considered Pacific Islander, and ensuring data on NHPI students is separated from Asian/Asian American students. No racial or ethnic community is a monolith, and equity in education requires that policies and strategies incorporate the diversity and complexity of experiences across and within communities of color.

We hope that you will similarly honor the voices, experiences, and leadership of Pacific Islander Oregonians by passing HB 3144 and investing in the future of our state's Pacific Islander students.

Thank you,

Jenny Lee
Deputy Director
Coalition of Communities of Color