

February 15, 2023
Testimony in support of House Bill 3144
Education Committee

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

Thank you for the opportunity to share our strong support of HB 3144, the Pacific Islander Student Success Act. My name is Allie Yee, and I am a Co-Executive Director at APANO, a culturally specific organization that unites Asians and Pacific Islanders to build power, develop leaders, and advance equity. I submit this testimony on behalf of APANO in alignment with our mission statement of equity. We work to remove barriers to access for communities, and that includes those impacted by laws designed to discriminate and silence people of color.

Pacific Islander students in Oregon are seeing unacceptable educational disparities, from above average suspensions / expulsions and decreasing attendance to staggering dropout rates. Too often, these challenges have been masked with data about Pacific Islander students grouped together within a broader category including Asian Americans of various ethnicities. This has led to an erasure of the needs among Pacific Islander students and disregard for the disproportionate barriers they experience in their educational journeys. It is important to recognize that disaggregation across all Asian, Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander communities is crucial to an equitable impact in education.

HB 3144 dedicates the resources and capacity needed to create a community-informed plan that will provide specific support for Pacific Islander students. It is crucial that the bill support engagement with Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander communities, and youth in particular, to ensure the plan will support students in specific and unique ways that best serve them. The creation of an equitable education system requires leadership and guidance from Native Hawaiian and Pacific Island community members and stakeholders.

With 12,000 Pacific Islander students in Oregon, the state has one of the largest Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander populations in the country, which continues to grow. As a state, we must invest in an equitable education system that is shaped by and serves Pacific Islander students and affords them the array of opportunities that a quality education provides.

Thank you,
Allie Yee
Co-Executive Director
APANO