



## Support for HB 3144, Pacific Islander Student Success Bill

February 14, 2023

Alii, Aloha, Hafa Adai, Iakwe, Kasalelei, Malo 'e lelei, Ran Anim, Kasalelei, Talofa and Tirowand Chair Neron, Vice-Chairs Hudson and Wright, and members of the House Education committee,

We write to you as the Oregon Pacific Islander Coalition (OPIC) **in support of House Bill 3144**. OPIC is a collective of Pacific Islander led and serving organizations, and individual leaders organizing to create thriving Pacific Islander (Melanesian, Micronesian and Polynesian) communities rooted in our many indigenous values, languages, cultures, and histories. OPIC originally formed in April 2020 as a community-led COVID-19 Response Task Force. Our leaders knew firsthand that **the lack of Pacific Islander-specific public health infrastructure would result in devastating impacts** for Oregon's Pacific Islander communities unless we acted in collaboration with one another.

Unfortunately, we see this trend in other sectors, like education. Resulting in significant educational disparities for our communities. In 2020-2021, PI students in grades 9-12 had the **highest rate of being chronically absent** at 47.6% , the **second lowest graduation rate** at 76.6%, and the **lowest rate of students on track to graduate** at 57.4%.<sup>1</sup> It is critical to understand that despite these educational outcomes, **PI communities are fiercely committed to the development and success of future generations**.

What quantitative data, and aggregate categories like Asian Pacific Islander (API), fails to capture is the unique structural barriers that PI students navigate. The financial hardship, language access issues, and cultural and familial responsibilities placed on our youth often clash with Western systems of education. Access to resources that meet the unique needs of PI students and families is difficult to come by. Micronesian students and families who migrate to the U.S. through the COFA (Compact of Free Association) are allowed to enter the U.S. without restrictions, but cannot be granted full citizenship status. This has limited COFA islanders' access to important federal and state resources. We see in our work how a lack of access to basic needs for PI families

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.oregon.gov/ode/schools-and-districts/reportcards/Documents/rptcard2021.pdf>

or households weighs on our students while they fulfill cultural responsibilities and attempt to engage in educational spaces that do not understand their experiences.

These experiences **continue to remain invisible** because education data that drives Oregon's decision-making fails to disaggregate Pacific Islanders from the larger Asian category, and provide more granular level data to highlight the unique needs within the 20,00 islands, 30+ nations, and vast cultures and ethnicities represented in Oregon's Pacific Islander communities. House Bill 3144 provides Oregon with the opportunity to develop a robust and culturally specific effort to support NHPI students. This includes designing culturally-specific interventions, data disaggregation, and partnership with community-leaders who are already working to advance the educational experiences of NHPI youth. We urge you to **support HB3144** and invest in the future of Oregon's Pacific Islander communities.

Sincerely,



Alyshia Alohalani Macaysa on behalf of the Oregon Pacific Islander Coalition

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