

To the Committee:

I'm writing today in support of SB 612, the Indigenous Language Justice Fund.

As a citizen of the Comanche Nation, I know how much numu tekwapu matters to Indigenous people. Although the term indicates the Comanche Language, its meaning is really “our language,” a reminder of the locality and diversity of language within broader culture.

Supporting Indigenous languages in any capacity is a good idea right now. Oregon's passage of SB 13 in 2017 opened the door to expansive education in the lives and cultures of the state's 9 recognized tribes. Having further legal groundwork to increase Indigenous education in the state means exposure to the languages of not just the 9 recognized tribes of this state (and the numerous tribes not recognized by the federal government) but the numerous Indigenous languages spoken in the State of Oregon.

Students should be exposed to Sahaptin, Numic, Chinookan languages, they should learn more about (and in) diasporic Indigenous cultures and their original languages, they should see people for who they say they are rather than some flattened, academic vision of people that drains them of vitality.

A state effort to further bolster language knowledge and interpretation, including the funding of Indigenous interpreters, means that the state will be better equipped to meet its equity goals when it comes to outreach and service provision. If this means an interpretation unit only serves 3 or 4 people when others serve many many more, so be it. Even small languages need to be kept alive in this state.

Sincerest thanks,  
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