



February 28, 2023

Senate Committee on Rules,

**Chair Lieber, Vice Chair Knopp, and Members of the Committee,**

My name is Thien Vo, my pronouns are he/him and I am the Field Organizer at APANO, a culturally specific organization that unites Asians and Pacific Islanders to build power, develop leaders, and advance equity through organizing, advocacy, community development, and cultural work.

At APANO we are working towards an Oregon where all communities have the rights, resources and recognition to thrive. Our statewide systems must meet the needs of our communities and be available in languages that they understand in order to be truly effective.

Without adequate access to interpretation, Oregonians who speak Indigenous languages face tremendous barriers to participating in society and experience devastating human rights violations, including delay or denial of life-saving medical care, inaccessibility of critical services (e.g. safety, public benefits and social programs), wrongful imprisonment, and unjust deportation and family separation.

When anyone in our community is denied basic human rights, all of us suffer. We can strengthen our communities and state as a whole by ensuring that everyone can understand and be understood. Colonialism and erasure are a part of America and Oregon's history; we must take steps now to make sure that everyone is ensure their fundamental right to understand and be understood.

Senate bills 612 and 911 take meaningful steps towards ensuring that the estimated 35,000 Oregonians who speak and indigenous language from present day Mexico, Central America, or South America as their primary language can fully participate in our society.

SB 911 will establish a commission for Original Peoples from South America, Central America, and Mexico within the Oregon Advocacy Commissions Office, ensuring that the voices of Indigenous communities are represented in state government and have a direct voice in policy proposals that concern Indigenous Oregonians.

SB 612 will result in the development of language proficiency evaluation mechanisms for Indigenous languages, allowing interpreters to demonstrate their language skills and obtain formal credentialing. The bill will also allow Indigenous interpreters to be paid a living wage and



prevent Indigenous Oregonians from being forced to pay for their own interpretation through a potentially unreliable or unqualified interpreter.

**We urge your YES vote on SB 612 and SB 911.**

Thank you,  
Thien Vo  
Field Organizer  
APANO