

March 19, 2024

RE: Renames the position of Administrator of the Oregon Advocacy Commissions Office to executive director of the Oregon Advocacy Commissions Office.

To Senate Committee on Rules,

I am writing to personally express my strong and unwavering support for the Oregon Advocacy Commissions Office (OACO) and the vital role it plays in ensuring that the voices of historically marginalized and oppressed communities are heard, valued, and amplified. As an individual with firsthand experience serving as a Commissioner, I have witnessed the profound impact that OACO has in bridging the gap between communities and government institutions. I write today **not** on behalf of the Commission itself, but as someone who understands the importance of this work and the necessity of continued support and investment in OACO.

In an era where many individuals feel an increasing fear and hesitation to approach authority, OACO stands as a beacon of accessibility and representation. The Commission's unique position allows it to foster trust, elevate community concerns, and provide a critical platform where people feel seen and heard. Without this vital entity, many voices would remain unheard, and the perspectives of those most impacted by systemic inequities would risk being lost in the legislative process.

Leadership within OACO is central to its success. The culture and climate of the Commission are directly influenced by those who guide it, and the power of words and actions cannot be overstated. How we set up OACO's leadership for success is crucial, as is how we, as a broader community, offer our support. It is imperative that we provide the necessary resources and institutional backing to ensure OACO can continue its mission effectively and sustainably.

I strongly encourage the legislature to recognize and embrace the tremendous potential of OACO by investing in its future. This means not only maintaining current support but actively seeking ways to expand and celebrate the work of the Commission in a sustainable and forward-thinking manner. Moreover, I urge the broader community to engage more deeply with OACO, recognizing its pivotal role in advancing equity and justice across Oregon.

In closing, I stand in full support of the Oregon Advocacy Commissions Office and the critical work it undertakes. I urge you to prioritize the empowerment and sustainability of OACO, ensuring that the voices of all Oregonians continue to be heard and valued within our democratic processes.

Sincerely,

Libra Forde (as an Oregon Resident)