



**OREGON HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**

**Testimony in Support of HB 3768 | Nowruz Day**

March 24th, 2025

Chair Bowman, Vice Chairs Drazan & Pham, & Members of the Committee,

For the record, my name is Farrah Chaichi, and I am the Representative for House District 35, Beaverton and Aloha.

Thank you for your time and attention this morning, and this extremely well-timed public hearing. I am grateful to have had the opportunity to bring to our colleagues in the House two Nowruz-related opening ceremonies these last couple of Thursdays. Nowruz is the Persian New Year, which falls on the Spring Equinox every year. It symbolizes rebirth and renewal, patience and prosperity. There are a variety of traditions, one of which was graciously brought to us last week by one of the folks testifying today in the form of a Haft-sin table that sets the stage for a beautiful New Year. Today I am here to ask you to support HB 3768 to have the state of Oregon recognize March 21st as Nowruz Day.

Growing up in Beaverton, I was lucky to live less than two miles away from the best Persian market in the Metro area, according to my father. His close friends from back home moved here as well. He made more friends from Iran while he was in school and those relationships continue to this day. More Saturdays than not he and his friends would take turns hosting what I termed "Persian parties". They were just like a big extended family dinner, only with a ton of Persian dishes and music. Later in the evening the music would be shut off and the television turned on to a community TV station where a show called My Iran would air news, music, and cultural updates. Despite growing up in this strong Persian culture I didn't see our traditions or experiences reflected outside our homes. And it definitely did not seem like local governments, or even the state and national governments reflected the reality we lived.

I know that representation matters, that it is powerful and important for people to see themselves reflected in institutions like the media, schools, and elected office. In the 2010s there was a Persian government official who would be interviewed on TV. I would take note that his

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face and accent reminded me of my dad and his friends before I ever noticed what he was actually talking about. Around the same time a reality show featuring Persians started airing. And again it was nice to see my reality, like the foods I grew up with or some of the customs (like extreme hospitality), reflected on TV. But on the 13th of this month, when we were treated to Persian music in celebration of Nowruz on the House floor, experiencing my culture, my family, and my history in this space was beyond moving. It's been a week and half and I still can't fully articulate what it meant to me. Then last week seeing our colleagues respond to the beauty of the Haft-sin table was another moment of joy and pride that this building and state is for ALL of us.

Recognizing the 21st of March each year as Nowruz Day is a simple but strong acknowledgement of the traditions of the many Iranians who have made Oregon their home. I hope I can count on your support for HB 3768

Thank you.

In Solidarity,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Farrah Chaichi". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Representative Farrah Chaichi, HD 35