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April 12, 2025

To the Members of the Oregon Legislature,

As a second-generation Vietnamese American born to refugees who fled Vietnam after the fall of Saigon, I write in wholehearted support of **House Concurrent Resolution 34**, which designates **April 30th as Vietnamese American Remembrance Day in Oregon**.

This resolution is deeply personal to me. My parents carried the pain and hope of a war-torn homeland as they began a new life in the United States. Their courage in the face of loss, displacement, and uncertainty shaped not only my family's story but also the broader Vietnamese American experience. April 30th, 1975 marks a moment of immense grief and upheaval—yet it is also a symbol of extraordinary resilience and enduring hope.

Today, I serve as a spiritual director and founder of SoulRoots, a ministry that creates spaces of rest and renewal for leaders—many from immigrant, BIPOC, and underserved communities—who often serve from places of exhaustion or invisibility. My calling is deeply rooted in the values passed down by my parents: faith, perseverance, and a deep sense of community. The Vietnamese diaspora has given so much to Oregon and to this nation—from contributions in education, healthcare, science, arts, and business, to the beauty of Vietnamese culture and tradition woven into the fabric of our society.

By honoring this day, we recognize the sacrifices of Vietnamese and American veterans, we affirm the lived experiences of refugees, and we celebrate the vibrant contributions of Vietnamese Americans across generations. We also extend an invitation for all Oregonians to reflect on the cost of war and the promise of freedom.

I am grateful to see our state take this step. It honors the past, uplifts the present, and inspires future generations to remember, heal, and lead with compassion.

With deep gratitude,
Joel To
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