

Kate Brown
Governor



**Oregon Commission on
Asian and Pacific Islander Affairs**
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OCHA Testimony in Support of HB 3525
Monday June 15, 2015, 1 pm, H-170
Joint Subcommittee on General Government

Dear Co-Chairs Smith and Steiner Hayward, and committee members:

My name is Chanpone Sinlapasai-Okamura. Thank you Chair Barker and members of the committee for giving me this opportunity to testify. I am writing on behalf of the Oregon Commission on Asian and Pacific Islander Affairs to express our unwavering support for HB 3525. This HB 3525 is a necessity for the Asian Pacific Islander community because they have been targeted, threatened, and defrauded by unlicensed non-lawyers "immigration consultants" who prey on vulnerable communities.

I would like to share with you examples that were brought to my attention during my service as a board member at Immigrant Refugee Community Organization. What makes these communities vulnerable is the lack of education about the subject matter. For over 37 years Oregon has opened our arms to immigrants and refugees from all over the world, Russians, Africans, Latin American, Asian, and now Middle Eastern families escaping prosecution and war.

Let me share with you the story of Ajhan, which means monk. Ajhan came to the U.S. on a religious visa to help out an Oregon temple. The temple wanted to bring him here because of his years of experience and expertise in the religion. During his stay he helped educate novice monks, leaders in the community, and unified multiple temples in Portland, Marion County, Eastern Oregon, and additionally traveled to train other temples in Washington, California, and Idaho. Due to his wealth of knowledge and expertise the temple wanted to help him get his green card. One of the board members knew a man who held himself out to be "immigration consultant". The consultant was paid \$5,000.00 and he filed paperwork. Later Ajhan and the temple learned that the consultant did file forms but did it wrong and as a result the case was denied and Ajhan was placed in deportation proceedings. This individual disappeared and could not be found, the temples did their own research and were confronted by threats of retaliation, harm to the temple, and Ajhan. Most Buddhists would say that this bad Karma and he will be punished in his after life by being reincarnated as dirt, however this does not stop the continuing criminal conduct by this person or anyone else like him.

Although under current law it is already unlawful for a person to act as an immigration consultant for compensation, the lack of criminalization of the conduct has not deterred individuals or given law enforcement or prosecutors the power to stop these behaviors. HB 3525 would make it a class A misdemeanor. I truly believe that this bill is needed to address the growing serious problem in Oregon and encourage the committee to give it your full support. I understand that there are still issues in the written bill to be resolved and I look forward to working with stakeholders to refine the language.

Respectfully,

Chanpone Sinlapasai
Commissioner OCAPIA

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Pacific Islander Affairs**

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