



February 23, 2021

Co-Chairs Taylor, Knope, Salinas, Boshart-Davis, and members of the redistricting committees,

For the record my name is Marchel Hirschfield, my pronouns are she/her and I am the Political Director submitting this testimony on behalf of the Asian Pacific American Network of Oregon (APANO). Founded in 1996, our organization serves the Asian Pacific Islander community throughout Oregon. APANO unites Asians and Pacific Islanders to build power, develop leaders, and advance equity through organizing, advocacy, community development, and cultural work. API families come from more than 100 different ethnic, cultural, and linguistic groups.

While our Asian and Pacific Islander (API) communities have made generations of contributions to Oregon, our history in Oregon is that of overcoming persistent discrimination and inequities. Oregon has discriminated against API communities since its very founding: repeatedly restricting the ability of Asian communities to own land, failing to prosecute white Oregonians for the theft of property owned by Oregonians of Japanese descent during their internment, and tacitly standing by while Asian immigrants were harassed or even killed. Today, discrimination against API communities looks like disparate outcomes in K-12 education settings. Breaking the model minority myth, in Oregon, Asian and Pacific Islanders are less likely to hold a high school diploma or GED than White folks. Economically, nearly 50% of Pacific Islanders are low-income, and 23% are in poverty, the highest rate in Oregon

And yet, Asian Pacific Islanders continue to support our families and communities, and we continue to call Oregon home. API communities have grown over 40% in the last decade. In 2017, the Asian population became Oregon's fastest growing demographic, with Micronesian Islander communities the single fastest growing ethnic minority.

APANO's growth in the past twenty years mirrors the growth of our communities. Our civic engagement work is fueled by volunteers and community members who are interested in making sure that API communities in our state understand what's at stake on the ballot each election cycle, and understand how to exercise their voice and their vote. Through year round civic engagement, APANO develops community leaders by engaging the API community in local ordinances, state and federal legislation, ballot measures, and other public policy.

That's why we care about redistricting. We understand two key things: 1) our communities are a growing part of Oregon and 2) our voices are important. Redistricting offers the key chance to see how the past decade of API population growth should translate into greater representation in Salem. We believe redistricting is one way we can address the lack of API voices in Salem, as well as at the local and school board level.



We look forward to working with this committee, the Oregon legislature and our communities to ensure that redistricting engages the API community and that it responds to our growing communities needs. In order to meaningfully engage API communities, the legislature should consider providing translation to API languages, fixed dates so that community organizations reach out to our members, and creating innovative solutions with local partners to ensure access in more rural parts of our state for Oregonians who don't have broadband at home. This process is also happening simultaneously to a burst of anti-Asian violence that API communities in Oregon and across the country have experienced in the past few weeks. This has been a heavy emotional time for our communities, and the legislature should recognize that.

The Legislature's process for engaging Oregon communities in redistricting is going to be critical.

On behalf of the Asian Pacific Islander community in Oregon, thank you.

Sincerely,

Marchel Hirschfield, Political Director, APANO