

Joint Committee on Ways and Means Subcommittee on General Government Re: SB 5501
Appropriate moneys from General Fund to OACO for biennial expenses Co-Chair Golden,

Co-Chair Smith, and fellow Committee Members,

My name is Makerusa 'mak' Porotesano. I am writing today in support of SB 5501.

I grew up in Portland to a single mother from American Samoa. She worked multiple jobs to help support our family and taught me many life lessons that allowed me to navigate great adversities. Her parenting helped me to earn a graduate degree, lead community organizations and be a loving father. As much as my mother and community did for me, I struggled greatly living in Oregon trying to find myself in the classroom, neighborhood and community programs.

This struggle to find representation and identity was so great that I often found myself leaving Oregon. I left after high school in 2000 to American Samoa to finally live in a place that understood me. I left again to Hawaii in 2010 after finishing my Bachelors degree to find an education system that could support my graduate level desire to serve my community. Now here I stand again in Oregon, finding myself in a similar position. Do I live here or do I leave?

In 2014 I became a father and in 2016 I moved back to Oregon. Since my return, I have been working urgently to create a world where my daughter will be able to see herself. Speaking at county hearings, creating programs and resources for Islanders and doing my part to be present to Pacific islander youth so that they can see themselves. I want an Oregon that my daughter can feel like she can live and stay in and an Oregon that will advocate and reflect her values. We deserve an Oregon that has systems in place that allows our communities to be seen, heard and valued.

The approval of this bill will allow the proper support to groups like the Oregon Advocacy Commission on Asian and Pacific Islanders (OCAPIA). OCAPIA, with proper support, can help push initiatives and resources that our communities have long been looking for. This bill will also allow Oregon lawmakers and policies to reflect the needs of our community through the many commissions that support racial minorities.

I strongly support this bill and would be happy to provide support where I can. I thank you all for your time and consideration.

With abiding respect,

Makerusa Porotesano, M.Ed

Oregon Pacific Islander Coalition - Executive Board Member

Pacific Islander Student Alliance Conference - Founder