



June 17, 2021

Dear Members of the Oregon Senate,

I am providing testimony in support of House Bill 2914, which designates April of each year as Arab American Heritage Month.

Thank you Senate Majority Leader Wagner and members of the committee.

My name is Hala Gores and I am a founding member of and first President of the Arab American Cultural Center of Oregon, also known as AACCO.

I am a proud Arab American immigrant to the United States. I have resided in Oregon since my family moved here when I was 10 years old.

I have been an attorney for 32 years and was President of the Oregon Trial Lawyers Association and a recipient of OTLA's Public Justice Award, as well as a recipient of the Multnomah Bar Association's Diversity Award.

Arab Americans are diverse geographically. They or their ancestors immigrated to the United States from one of 22 Arab countries. Arab Americans are also diverse religiously and include Christians, Muslims and Jews, as well as others. My own family is Christian Palestinian Arab with a long history in Nazareth, as in Jesus of Nazareth. My mother's name is Mary and my father was a carpenter, true story. Arab Americans are also ethnically and politically diverse. What we share in common is a rich history and cultural and linguistic heritage.

There are many reasons in favor of designating April as Arab Heritage month. To mention just a few:

Oregon universities are temporary homes to thousands of international students from the 22 Arab countries. Designating April as Arab Heritage month would benefit Oregon universities by showing how welcoming Oregon is to international students from the Arab World.

Also, designating April as Arab Heritage month will help bring to Oregon national and international businesses that value diversity.

Designating April as Arab Heritage month will help our diverse Arab community be more visible and proud that they and their contributions are valued by our great state.

We have here a unique opportunity to celebrate Oregon's Arab American community and

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to help build bridges to allow for exploration of the beauty of Arab American culture, history and heritage.

Thank you.

Very truly yours,

*Hala Gores*

Hala J. Gores

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