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On Behalf Of:

Committee: Senate Committee On Veterans and Emergency Preparedness

Measure: SB1509

February 1, 2022

Oregon Senate Military and Emergency Preparedness Committee

Dear Distinguished Committee Members

A few days after the bombing of Pearl Harbor, my father, Harry M. Tamura, volunteered for the U.S. Army. After basic training he was assigned to the 442nd Regimental Combat Team. Three of my uncles also served in the Army, one in the Military Intelligence Service, translating documents and interrogating Japanese prisoners.

While the Japanese American (Nisei) men from Hood River served valiantly overseas, my mother, and both my maternal and paternal grandparents were incarcerated in fenced-in concentration camps on the West Coast, surrounded by barbed wire and armed guards.

I was shocked to learn that 33,000 Nisei served our country during World War II, while 120,000 Japanese Americans were held in concentration camps. My parents and grandparents didn't talk about their experiences during the war, but my older sister asked our maternal grandmother many questions and she eventually gave us insight into her time in the concentration camps. With further questioning of our parents, we pieced together more of our family's struggles in the camps and learned of the bravery of the Japanese Americans.

I can think of no better way to honor the Nisei of Hood River than to pass Senate Bill 1509 to dedicate Highway 35 as the Oregon Nisei Veterans World War II Memorial Highway. On my next visit to Hood River, I look forward to traveling with my children on this 41 mile highway, just steps from my childhood home, knowing that my father and other Japanese Americans are acknowledged and honored for their service.

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