

I am writing in support of Oregon Senate Bill 1509. Hillsboro, Oregon has been my family's home and heritage for over 100 years. My brave and enterprising great grandfather bought 50 acres of land in 1916 (under his eldest son's name because it was illegal for Japanese immigrants to purchase land at that time). Despite obstacles and hardships faced during WWII, when my family was forced to evacuate, the farmland and business are still intact because of tenacity, luck, and most of all welcoming and compassionate neighbors who knew and shared our story.

Growing up my family proudly honored our great uncles, as well as many family friends, who served in the 442nd, MIS, and 100th Battalion. We listened wide-eyed and captivated, as they told us about their courageous feats and about how they felt serving in a segregated unit, sent on the most dangerous missions, all while their families were incarcerated. We quickly realized that they were a special group of individuals in our local history who really gave it all they got because they had nothing else to lose. They truly lived up to their famous motto "Go For Broke".

For over a decade I have collaborated with the Japanese American Museum of Oregon to create meaningful centerpieces and gifts paying tribute to heroes of the Japanese American community. One of my most memorable moments was being chosen to design and create the centerpieces for the Congressional Gold Medal Ceremony honoring Japanese American WWII Veterans in Washington D.C. It was a long time coming for these brave men and I was moved beyond words to meet them and their families, and hear their awe-inspiring stories of true grit. Stories just like these are the lifeblood of a community. Passing Senate Bill 1509 would be a tremendous honor to these veterans, their families, and the many special individuals integral to shaping the surrounding lands my family has called home.

Sincerely,

Kira Iwasaki
Five Oaks Museum – board member
Beaverton, OR