

February 16, 2023

Re: Support for HB 3144 - Pacific Islander Student Success

Dear Chair Neron, Vice-Chairs Hudson and Wright, and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to submit this written testimony in support of HB-3144. My name is Marie Lo, and I am a professor and the chair of the English Department at Portland State University, where I teach courses on Asian American literature and culture. I have been at PSU for over 20 years. However, I am writing as individual and not as a representative of PSU. I am writing as an individual who has worked to support student success and who has seen first-hand the challenges that our Pacific Islander students face. There is little culturally specific curriculum and few resources dedicated to support our Pacific Islander students. The impact of this lack of support is reflected in the retention of Pacific Islander students. According to a 2021 PSU Asian American and Pacific Islander Presidential Fellows Report by Dr. Betty Izumi and Bree Kalima, Pacific Islanders have one of the lowest retention and graduate rates of all full-time undergraduates. But what is happening at PSU, however, is not unique. Rather, it reflects the broader and systemic erasure of Pacific Islander communities and the ongoing lack of state investment in our Pacific Islander students.

That is why I am writing in support of HB-3144. It will provide resources and a plan to address these educational disparities that will continue to widen if left unaddressed. Pacific Islanders are one of the fastest growing ethnic groups in Oregon according to the 2020 census, and there is increasing urgency to ensure that our Pacific Islander students are not left behind. HB-3144 is an important step forward in fostering Pacific Islander student success.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Marie Lo