

Respected Chair Senator James Manning Jr, Vice-Chair Senator Kim Thatcher, Senator Chris Gorsek, Senator Dennis Linthicum, Senator Aaron Woods

Namaste,

Thank you for this opportunity to speak to the august body today.

My name is Ramesh Krishnamurthy and I have been a resident of Beaverton for over 30 years. An engineer by training, now retired, I was employed by Intel Corp in Hillsboro for over 25 years. My spouse is an alumnus of Portland State University with a business degree and was also employed by Intel, now retired.

I speak in support of this bill that is recognizing and appreciating the Indian independence and connection to the great state of Oregon. It is a matter of pride that our two nations are among the largest democracies in the world today and, in different ways, have so much in common to share, celebrate and rejoice; and, at the same time, cherish the different histories, heritage, culture, traditions and values.

Earliest anecdotal settling of people of Indian origin dates back to the 1870s and '90s when, along with an influx of railroad workers from the north came to eastern Washington state. In the 1960s, Indians were part of a significant number of medical professionals moved and settled in Oregon. Since that time, several technology industries that were setup and were growing in Oregon – like HP in Corvallis, Intel in Hillsboro, Tektronix in Beaverton, PGE in Portland – hired engineering graduates to their facilities here. The earliest of them were in the late 1970s, with surges towards the early 80s, forming the core of the Indian communities here. Many of us, including me, still call Oregon our home. Medical professionals had been steadily increasing in numbers all this time. The year 2000 brought a large number of IT professionals that saw a big spike in the Indian population all across Oregon.

I was able to extract and get some numbers from the US 2020 census data available about the Indian population in Oregon. There appears to be over 80 thousand people of Indian origin in Oregon.

Many Indian families here in Oregon have now had at least two generations of children that were born, brought up, educated and employed in Oregon.

Nationally, it has been recognized that in most states Indians form one of the communities that has a high rate of completing college education, employment in a broad range of professional disciplines, and tend to be model citizens, constructively contributing to the local economy and society, and integrate well into the local community in all walks of life while, at the same time, retaining and cherishing their Indian culture and heritage. This is no different in Oregon. Indians employed in the tech industries in Oregon have held senior positions, and entrepreneurs have started and established small businesses. These entrepreneurs have generated jobs locally and have typically been model employers.

A quick look at the institutions of higher learning in Oregon, including UofO, OSU, PSU, UofP and the community college system, shows that there are eminent faculty in most engineering and science departments. This is in addition to teachers who teach all grades, from elementary to high school.

Indians are also in the hotel, restaurant and hospitality industry. Nowadays, there may not be many cities and townships in Oregon that does not have an Indian eatery. Some in the metropolitan areas have not only brought the Indian cuisine to Oregonians, they have made themselves the place to go anytime there is a choice.

Indians are also represented through engagement in civic bodies and local government – giving back the community that gave them so much. We have Sunita Garg, who was elected to the Beaverton School District Board, and we have Commissioners on the West Slope Water District and Raleigh Hills Water District, Tigard City Planning Commission, Clean Water Services Advisory Commission, and more.

The Indian community has also established centers for education, dissemination and creating awareness of the Indian culture, arts, culture and religion. Kalakendra has been one of the prominent and oldest organizations that brings to the Portland Metro area performing arts through visiting artists and troupes.

Rasika, based in Hillsboro, similarly caters to the music and dance arts, not only by bringing artists and their performances, but also a school that imparts these arts.

There are many more performing artists all along the I-5 corridor who offer teaching and learning experience in Indian classical music and dance forms.

HECSA is a Hindu temple established in Hillsboro, recently moved closer to Portland that offers a place of worship to all in the community, at the same time offering casual classes in Hindu worship, cultural awareness and spiritual guidance.

Chinmaya Mission Portland was founded to provide a center for engaging and educating children in Indian household on the values, scriptures and traditions. The mission also teaches the children on how to give back to the community through service – service that includes cooking for the homeless and those in transition, fundraising and volunteering in local charitable organizations like the Oregon Food Bank, owning the cleanup and maintaining neighborhood streets with the Adopt a Road program. Other organizations are engaged in local communities – ISKON, India Cultural Association, and more.

In summary, not only has the Indian population settled in Oregon, they have been an exemplary community, contributing and caring for their neighbors at all levels – local, city and state. I am grateful for your time, and appreciate your consideration of House Concurrent Resolution 11.

My sincere thanks to Rep Ken Helm who took the initiative to introduce this HCR in the House, and to Senators Katie Lieber and Elizabeth Steiner who co-sponsored it in the Senate, Representatives DEXTER, GRAYBER, REYNOLDS, CHAICHI, NERON, PHAM K, Senators SOLLMAN, CAMPOS and JAMA who supported the resolution when introduced. I am also thankful to all the Representatives who voted unanimously to pass this on the House floor on January 31st.