

Oregon State Federation of Garden Clubs, Inc.

Member of National Garden clubs, Inc.



March 2, 2023

Senator James I. Manning Jr., Chair
Senate Committee on Veterans, Emergency Management, Federal and World Affairs
900 Court St, NE S-209
Salem, OR 97301

Subject: HB 2146

Dear Senator Manning,

Thank you and Vice Chair Thatcher and the other Committee members for this opportunity to testify in support of HB 2146. If HB 2146 becomes law, Oregon will honor 6,022 Gold Star Families with honorific highway signs on the 477 mile "Oregon Gold Star Families Memorial Highway" on US Hwy 30 across Oregon to the Idaho border and beyond until it reaches the Eastern seaboard.

I am Jane Sercombe, Veterans Liaison for the Oregon State Federation of Garden Clubs, Inc., and I am also the daughter of a World War II Veteran. The Oregon State Federation of Garden Clubs was organized in Salem in 1927 and in 1929 it was one of thirteen states with a federated garden club organization that joined together to create the National Garden Club. Oregon currently has 2,130 members in 65 Clubs organized into 13 districts.

In 1945 the National Garden Clubs (NGC) adopted a program that began a year earlier when the New Jersey Council of Garden Clubs planted 8,000 dogwood trees as a living memorial to the veterans of World War II. The NGC program became known as the Blue Star Highway System that now cover thousands of miles across the continental United States, Alaska and Hawaii and is modeled after the Blue Stars displayed on flags and banners from the homes and businesses showing support for the sons and daughters involved in the war effort. The Blue Star program was later expanded to include Gold Star Markers to honor the families of our heroes who gave the ultimate sacrifice for their country. Both markers may be seen along our highways in rest stops, public gardens, veterans' cemeteries and other areas of high visibility to remind us of what we owe our veterans for the freedoms we enjoy today.

In Oregon, our State organization and its Clubs and Districts have been active participants in the Blue and Gold Star program and we currently have 87 Blue Star and 3 Gold Star markers in place. Within the past two years we have been working to develop partnerships with Oregon veterans associations and especially with Dick Tobiason, Chairman, Bend Heroes Foundation, to expand the placement of more of these important markers across Oregon. On September 25, 2022, which was national "Gold Star Mother's and Family's Day" we participated in the placing of both a Blue and a Gold Star marker at the Bend Heroes Memorial. It was a very emotional and rewarding experience, especially for the families being honored.

We currently have markers on order and dedication dates pending for Portland, Albany, Medford, Redmond, Hood River and a second location in Bend. We wholeheartedly support Dick's vision of dedicating Blue Star and Gold Star memorials at all forty-one cemeteries across Oregon where annual "Wreaths Across America" ceremonies are conducted. More importantly we support the vision expressed in HB 2146 to complete Oregon's portion of the national Highway 30's **Gold Star Families Memorial Highway** from coast to coast.

On behalf of the Oregon State Federation of Garden Clubs, Inc., and the 2,130 garden club members across Oregon, I urge this Committee to unanimously vote in favor of HB 2146 with a "**Do Pass**" recommendation to the Oregon Senate.

I would be pleased to respond to any questions the Committee may have. Thank you.

Respectfully,

signed

Jane Sercombe, Veterans Liaison
Oregon State Federation of Garden Clubs, Inc.
4668 Calaroga Drive
West Linn, OR 97068-1023
503-317-8400 or jane.sercombe@gmail.com