



Native American Youth and Family Center

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February 8, 2024

Chair Bynum, Vice Chair Diehl, Vice Chair Nguyen, and Members of the House Committee on Economic Development and Small Business

Re: House Bill 4041 – Support

Chair Bynum, Vice Chair Diehl, Vice Chair Nguyen, and Members of the Committee. For the record my name is Ria Ward. I identify as Central American Indigenous and I testify today as a representative of the Native American Youth and Family Center or NAYA located in Portland, Oregon. NAYA is a wraparound social service agency, serving roughly 2,500 individuals and impacting the lives of over 10,000 individuals annually. NAYA is committed to cultivating a healthy and prosperous urban Native community. We envision our diverse, Native population thriving in safe, active, and lively neighborhoods with equitable access to education, intergenerational housing, living wage jobs, and community wealth building opportunities across the Portland metro region.

Established in 2022 through Senate Bill 1579, funding received from the Economic Equity Investment Program have been a crucial component to NAYA's cultivation of the Native community. To date, NAYA has provided over \$115,000 to 21 beneficiaries across three areas: down payment assistance, home repair, and Native scholarships. This translates to four first-time homebuyers, two individuals beginning or completing secondary education, and critical repairs for fifteen homeowners. Additionally, we are using our EEIP allocation to establish a land trust allowing NAYA to create affordable intergenerational housing.

Overseeing this program for NAYA has provided me with insight into the impact that economic equity can have when placed in the hands of knowledgeable partners closely connected to their communities. This is why I urge you to support the –1 amendments to HB 4041, appropriating an additional \$30 million to Oregon Business Development Department for the continuation of the Economic Equity Investment Program.

Thank you,

Ria Ward