

Submitter: Nicole Kalk
On Behalf Of:
Committee: House Committee On Early Childhood and Human Services
Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB2976

I am writing today to oppose HB 2976. HB 2976 proposes to allocate funds from the General Fund to the Oregon Department of Administrative Services for distribution to nonprofit groups for purposes related to the interpretation of indigenous languages. Given our state's current financial challenges, it is important to scrutinize every new expenditure carefully. The bill's potential impact on the state budget has not been fully assessed, as indicated by the lack of a detailed fiscal impact statement.

While the preservation and interpretation of indigenous languages is important, it is necessary to consider whether this expenditure aligns with our state's most pressing needs. Funds allocated to this program could potentially be used for other critical areas such as education, healthcare, or infrastructure improvements. The bill does not provide sufficient details on how the funds will be managed, distributed, or monitored once given to nonprofit groups. Without proper oversight mechanisms, there is a risk of inefficient use of taxpayer money.

It is unclear whether this appropriation is a one-time expense or if it will create ongoing financial obligations for the state. If this becomes a recurring expense, it could strain future budgets and potentially lead to tax increases. Before allocating state funds, alternative funding sources such as federal grants, private donations, or partnerships with tribal governments should be explored. This approach could potentially achieve the bill's objectives without burdening the state budget.

Given the current economic uncertainties, introducing new spending programs requires caution. Revisiting this initiative when the state's financial outlook is more stable may be more prudent. The bill lacks clear metrics for measuring the success and impact of this funding. Without defined goals and performance indicators, justifying this expenditure to taxpayers is challenging. Passing this bill could set a precedent for similar funding requests from other cultural or linguistic groups, potentially leading to a significant cumulative impact on the state budget.

In conclusion, the potential financial burden on our state, coupled with the lack of clear fiscal impact assessment, oversight mechanisms, and defined outcomes, makes it difficult to support in its current form. I urge the legislature to reconsider this bill, explore alternative funding options, and prioritize our state's most pressing financial needs. Any new appropriations should be thoroughly vetted to ensure they provide clear, measurable benefits to Oregon's citizens without compromising our state's fiscal health.