

Testimony on the Importance of Equity in School Funding Formula

Oregon School Funding Task Force, March 21, 2014

Good Afternoon Chair Devlin and Task Force members,

For the record, my name is Michelle Vlach-Ing. I am an attorney in Salem, Oregon. I also serve on the Oregon Commission for Asian and Pacific Islander Affairs and I am here in my capacity as a Commissioner.

The needs of the Asian and Pacific Islander community are varied. Some of us have roots in the United States reaching back to the 1800's and are integrated into businesses, jobs, churches and neighborhoods. Others are more recently transplanted here for job opportunities such as farm workers, restaurant workers, technicians, computer software & hardware engineers, and energy production, to name a few. We all have families and many of those families have school aged children.

Whatever our background, we are a resource to this State. All our children deserve access to education, and not just access, but we need to emphasize and support certain programs in ways which will maximize benefits to Oregon and make a positive fiscal impact.

The world we live in today is much different from the world we lived in not too long ago. Communication and travel between countries is much more accessible, affordable and frequent. If we want to compete in the global economy, we need a work force that is multilingual and adept in cultural understanding.

In the Salem-Keizer School District alone, 56 different languages are spoken at home and 16% of students are ELL. There may be the next Steve Jobs, A.C. Gilbert or Tracy Britt Cool return from school today to a home which does not speak English as its primary language. We encourage this Task Force to keep in mind the value of funding ELL, language immersion, early learning and support teacher diversity for the benefit of all students.

Thank you for the opportunity to address this Task Force, but more importantly, thank you for the hours of work and diligence this Task Force has contributed to the issue of Equity in school funding.