

MULTNOMAH COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
PUBLIC TESTIMONY SIGN-UP

Please complete this form and return to the Board Clerk
This form is a public record

MEETING DATE: 5-20-15

SUBJECT: Multnomah County Fiscal Year 2016 Budget

SPECIFIC BUDGET TOPIC (DEPARTMENT OR PROGRAM): Diversity & Civic
Leadership

FOR: X AGAINST: _____ THE ABOVE BUDGET TOPIC

NAME (**PRINT** & INCLUDE **PRONUNCIATION**): Nai Zhao

ADDRESS: 14606 NE Glisan St.

CITY/STATE/ZIP: Portland OR / 97230

PHONE: DAYS: 503-407-7777 (cell) EVES: _____

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FAX: _____

IF YOU WISH TO ADDRESS THE BOARD IN PERSON:

1. Please complete this form and submit to the Board Clerk.
2. Commenters are called to testify in the order forms are received. The Presiding Officer may re-arrange the order that testimony is given or ask Invited Guests or Elected Officials to speak first.
3. When your name is called, come forward and be seated at the presenter's table; state your name for the record and speak clearly into the microphone.
4. Public comment is limited to **3 minutes or less** per person unless otherwise directed by the Chair, who is the Presiding Officer.
5. A buzzer will signify the end of your allotted time.
6. If submitting handouts to be given to the Board, seven (7) copies are required. If only one (1) copy is provided, it will be received for the file and electronically shared with the Board and County Attorney after the meeting.
7. All meetings are audio and video recorded and can be viewed at: multco.us.
8. The Chair has authority to keep order and may impose reasonable restrictions necessary for the efficient and orderly conduct of a meeting. Any person who fails to comply with the Rules of Conduct, or who creates a disturbance, may be asked or required to leave and upon failure to do so, becomes a trespasser and will be treated accordingly. Copies of the Rules of Conduct are available next to the sign up sheets.

IF YOU WISH TO SUBMIT WRITTEN INSTEAD OF ORAL COMMENTS TO THE BOARD:

1. Please complete this form along with your written testimony and return to the Board Clerk at the meeting, or submit by e-mail at: lynda.grow@multco.us
2. Written testimony will be entered into the official record.

Good evening, Chairwoman and commissioners!

My name is Nai Zhao. I am here representing IRCO and am advocating for “Diversity & Civic Leadership” budget for \$500,000. Funds would support capacity building for culturally-specific community based organization like IRCO to increase constituent participant in County civic governance.

I am a Portland native and I come from the Lu-Mien Community, or Mien for short. We are a refugee community that immigrated to the United States in the 1970s as a result of the Indochinese War. My family has been here since 1980 and we are among the 1,100 other Mien in Oregon. An estimated 30,000 Mien reside in the United States, with much larger populations of Mien in Asia and in Europe.

Some of the obstacles for civic leadership and engagement I’ve experienced and noticed in the Mien community is we tend to shy away from public systems and depend on community leaders to resolve conflict rather than involving public authorities.

This is a barrier because these cultural norms keep refugee communities in siloes and away from the larger systems that impact their lives daily.

This practice gets passed on from generation to generation as it did in my own family, and I didn’t feel like I could affect change in my community if I didn’t educate myself about the larger community of Portland and Oregon.

Through IRCO’s leadership program I developed skills in relationship and trust building, sharing information and networking, facilitating meetings, and continuous quality improvement of a program, so that it stays relevant to multi-generation, diverse communities.

Having an opportunity to be funded through to 2015 East Portland Neighborhood Small Grant, I hope to bring together a wide range of East Portland Mien community members and create a safe space for the exchange of ideas across different cultural, religious, professional, and ideological ideas.

Only once we’ve come together can we identify the main issues our community faces and begin to address them.

I hope to mirror the experience I had through IRCO’s leadership program to assist in developing more Mien leaders so that we represent our community and engage with public systems – because, ethnic refugee communities, though they may be small, have lived experiences that shape the way they interact with other communities and systems, which are just as important as other group’s lived experiences, and these should be recognized. My hope isn’t just that we will develop Mien leaders for our community, but that all of our communities work together as one, and this is how we will get there.

I ask for support from you, commissioners, to continue to support and include Diversity & Civic Leadership program.