To Whom It May Concern,

March 29, 2018

I am writing on behalf of the Oregon Department of Education, Office of Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion. Our primary goal in our office is to support districts in closing opportunity and achievement gaps through culturally responsive practices. As such, we encourage districts in Oregon to hire international teachers legally working on a J-1 visa in order to promote cultural exchange, multiculturalism, and bilingualism/bi-literacy. We believe all students deserve the same opportunities to succeed in school and life, and our visiting teachers help us fulfill this vision. We give full, unconditional support to English learners/Emerging Bilinguals throughout the state of Oregon.

One of our priorities at the ODE is to graduate students who are college and career ready. Students who are bilingual already have an advantage when entering college and/or a career. We support every language from an additive perspective and realize there are many benefits to speaking more than one language. The ODE supports program models such as the Chinese language program in Confucius Classrooms and the continuation and growth of these programs.

The Confucius Institute is an essential partnership for our office and the Department and plays an important role in bridging languages and cultures. We value our relationship with Portland State University, the Confucius Institute, and China and this program has our unwavering support.

Please do not hesitate to contact me regarding any of the above statements.

The contact person for The Visiting Teachers Program is Kelly Slater, Education Specialist. Please do not hesitate to contact her with any questions regarding this program at Kelly.slater@state.or.us or by phone at [503] 947-5741.

Sincerely,

Dr. Markisha Smith
Director
Oregon Department of Education
Office of Equity, Diversity and Inclusion