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Subject: Support for HB 2134

Senator Laurie Monnes Anderson, Chair
Senate Committee on Health Care
900 Court St. NE, H-413
Salem, OR 97301

Dear Chair Monnes Anderson and members of the committee,

I am writing in support for HB 2134, the bill to grant the Oregon Health Authority and Department of Human Services rule-making authority to develop better data collection standards on the basis of race, ethnicity, language, and disability status.

The Center for Intercultural Organizing is a statewide organization working to building a multiracial, multiethnic movement for immigrant and refugee rights. Our work over the last decade has highlighted the incredible disparities in health outcomes for many immigrant & refugee communities in Oregon.

Unfortunately, the way the state currently collects health data is just not adequate to determining the full extent of those inequities. African immigrants are often categorized as African-American, which glosses over the significant and distinct health challenges these two communities experience. Individuals from the Middle East are often faced with a significant challenge: which racial box most accurately applies? Gathering only the barest of race and ethnicity data means that the health challenges that many of our members experience every day aren't fully understood or analyzed. This isn't just a dry or academic exercise: the lack of good data means that families all over our state aren't having their health needs met.

Oregon is diversifying rapidly, and the key to ensuring that all of our communities are healthy is good data. To really understand where health disparities exist and how to eliminate them, we need to do better. I therefore urge you to vote YES on HB 2134.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Kayse Jama".

Kayse Jama
Executive Director, Center for Intercultural Organizing