

-Testimony

March 2, 2021

It is an honor to present this testimony today in front of the chair and members of the committee. My name is Fednold Thelisdort and I used to live in Multnomah county. Last July 2020, I was put in a situation where I felt I had no other choice but to leave the city of Portland due safety concerns.

I will get straight to the point regarding this testimony: it is the biggest irony and hypocrisy for me, when we say we want to promote inclusion and diversity in our committees and offices, while we also cut off all of the funds that are the quintessential foundation of the existence of these programs which are, in fact, the most tangible and effective ways we can promote this inclusion and diversity that we say on paper we aim to promote. I am here in front of all of you today as an immigrant, a black man, a husband and a father who wants the best for his children and the generation to come, so that they do not need to one day flee their homes, cities and States, due to racism and disparity, similar to what I have experienced while doing my job to keep children and family safe in Multnomah county.

We can do more as a city, as the chair and members of the committees for the people we are serving, if we actively listen to them and feel the pain and suffering that they have been going through every single day of their lives in our cities, no matter their origin, race, status, gender, religion or health issues. I urge you all to stop underfunding these vital programs, like the OAC, that are currently supporting and advocating for folks like me, and, instead, work to help making these programs stronger and more effective with their mission to serve our communities.

I would like to finish my testimony with my own personal story of being a victim of racism while doing my job to protect the children and families of my community. After reading my testimony, along with those of other fellow members of our community, it will be up to you to ask yourself if you really want to be a part of the solution or the problem. Do you feel like you can ignore these issues and continue to isolate these members of our community who struggle to find the support and protection they need to be active members of our society? Or could you choose to be a part of the solution by voting for Senate Bill 5501 to help the work that programs, like the OAC, are doing, by providing more material and staffing resources to achieve the goals that are set for our communities.

I used to work as a child protective service worker for the Oregon State Department of Human Service. I left my job and left Oregon this past October after a traumatic event that occurred while working with a family I was assigned to via court order. I had to remove 5 children due to neglect and unsafe living conditions from the children's parents. One of the family members verbally assaulted me with extreme racial hate speech, and then proceeded to threaten to kill me and make me and my family pay for what I did. The saddest part of all of this, was that this was not the first

time the family threatened to kill me, and people knew about this. My supervisor recommended me to bring law enforcement with me during the removal process of the children, unaware of how this may or may not actually protect me. I called the law enforcement that day for assistance and 6 white police officers went with me to the family's house. However, none of the police officers did anything to stop the family from threatening me and assaulting me with their white supremacist hate speech.

This is one of the reasons why I am asking you all to vote in favor of Senate Bill 5501, in order to bring more resources to organizations that allow colored folks like me to feel safe, protected and supported in their community. Programs like the Oregon Advocacy Commissions is making a big impact and difference in the lives of each Oregonian in Multnomah county, and if this is truly a value of our county, then the resources to support this cause needs to be a top priority.

Thank you for reading or listening to my testimony today. God bless you all.

Best,

Fednold Thelisdort