

Joint Committee on Ways and Means Subcommittee on General Government
Re: SB 5501 Appropriate moneys from General Fund to OACO for biennial expenses

Co-Chair Golden, Co-Chair Smith, and fellow Committee Members,

My name is Rosa Colquitt. I am writing this afternoon in support of SB 5501.

I am a long term Washington County civil rights activist, women's rights activist and advocate for health care rights, especially for women of color and other marginalized women. I identify as African American with ancestral bloodlines in the Cherokee Nation of Native Americans.

It was more than a decade ago, through mutual community development activities, when I became familiar with the work of the Oregon Commission on Black Affairs (OCBA) and the Oregon Commission for Women (OCFW). At that time they were doing the incredibly important work of building and uplifting their constituent groups, and thereby "building a better Oregon for all." I also recall the financial struggles of both, as well as OCHA and OCAPIA, to remain stable and active.

I believe the modest budget request put forth by the Oregon Advocacy Commissions' Office to provide administrative support for the four advocacy commissions is integral to building **equity** for Oregon's underrepresented communities. Equity at its simplest means fairness and justice.

Funding OACO will help to "minimally" build and sustain equity for Oregon's underrepresented communities. Given the well documented history of Oregon's white supremacy culture and exclusion, especially for Black Oregonians, we must properly invest in OACO to "minimally" mitigate the continuing unfairness, economic and social injustice in Oregon's communities of color.

In my volunteer work as a community advocate for health care rights, and in working with a number of non-profit organizations, I have found much of the research data of the commissions to be extremely helpful to these efforts. Supporting the OACO and the OACs uplifts communities of color, particularly during this time of the Covid crisis. Adequately funding OACO allows the agency to continue providing the research necessary to both the unique needs of specific underrepresented groups, as well as the common social ills of racism and white supremacy for all marginalized communities. The work of the OACs benefits ALL Oregonians and helps us to achieve equity -- to achieve the desired quality of life we all want to experience.

Oregon is a leader in our nation on voting rights and on providing health care for our children. Oregon can also be a leader in achieving equity for all of its citizens.

Thank you Co-Chair Golden, Co-Chair Smith, and the members of the Subcommittee for your YES vote on SB 5501, for funding the statutory work of the Oregon Advocacy Commissions.

Rosa Colquitt, PhD

Interim President, Greater Portland Chapter, National Organization for Women