



Oregon

Kate Brown, Governor

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RE: Testimony in support of HB 2123

Chair Holvey, Vice-Chair Bonham, Vice-Chair Grayber and Members of the Committee,

Oregon Parks and Recreation Department (OPRD) requests your support for HB 2123 changing the date of historic cemeteries to those that include the burial of a person who died 75 years before the current date.

Currently, under statute, a cemetery can only be considered historic if it includes the burial of someone who died before February 14, 1909. HB 2123 would align the date with state archaeological laws. Over 1500 cemeteries meet current eligibility criteria to be considered historic. It is likely this bill would make a few hundred additional cemeteries eligible for the program.

The historic designation affords additional protection to cemeteries. HB 2123 may also lead to an increase in protections for cemeteries with more diverse burials. Some of the more diverse populations that came later in Oregon's history cannot be preserved under current statutory language. Chinese, early Japanese and indigenous populations burials are preserved, but more recent populations like Latinx and larger Black populations are not necessarily included based on the current date in statute. It will increase protections for several cemeteries in central Oregon, when western immigrants settled slightly later. Many of these cemeteries date to the 1910s and 1920s.

HB 2123 was developed based on a request by the Oregon Commission on Historic Cemeteries, an appointed commission of volunteers dedicated to supporting the preservation of historic cemeteries in Oregon. The bill will make more cemeteries eligible for the historic cemetery grant program, but would not change the funding available.

Oregon Parks and Recreation Department's Heritage Division is committed to preserving Oregon's heritage, we believe HB 2123 will allow more of Oregon's story to be protected and shared with future generations.