

March 19, 2021

Re: Supporting HB 2337

Chair Prusak, Vice Chair Hayden, Vice Chair Salinas, and Members of the Committee,

I'm writing to encourage you to support HB 2337.

HB 2337 declares racism as a public health crisis in Oregon. Racism causes harm, trauma, illness, and death to Black, Indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC) Oregonians. HB 2337 acknowledges that Oregon's very founding as a state was rooted in racist ideals, and the damaging impact of these and other racist policies continue to exist within our present-day policies and systems. Further, this bill signals the need for accelerated, intentional actions to heal these injustices and articulates six initial strategies and investments to address health inequities.

Racism is pervasive and is integrated into every institution and system that is connected to the social determinants of health, and ultimately impacts Oregonian's ability to be healthy and well to the fullest potential. Racism in Oregon has deep roots and has left a legacy of trauma from one generation to the next, impacting Oregon Tribes and BIPOC communities through a cumulative effect.

Racism is the reason why COVID-19 has hit communities of color harder. In Oregon, Latinos represent nearly 40% of COVID-19 cases, despite the fact that they only comprise about 13% of the population. (Oregon Health Authority, 2020. COVID-19 Weekly Report: October 14, 2020).

Racism is the reason that even when you control for educational attainment and income inequality that people of color still experience higher rates of health inequities and average years of life lost. (Colen, Ramey, Cooksey, Williams. (2018))

Health inequities are preventable issues that when addressed provide significant cost savings not only to health systems, but also other systems related to the social determinants of health. More importantly, addressing these issues of racism improves the health and quality of life for all Oregonians.

Racial justice requires the formation and purposeful reinforcement of policies, practices, ideologies and behaviors that create equitable power, access, opportunity, treatment, and outcomes for all people regardless of race and redistribute resources to invest where inequities are greatest.

This effort will look like many similar ones out there. Racism didn't happen overnight and with one action and dismantling systemic racism will take many years, multiple legislative concepts, policies, and community pushes.

HB 2337 was developed by the Oregon Health Equity Task Force which is composed of leaders and community-based organizations representing BIPOC, Tribal, and Immigrant and Refugee communities and includes six initial strategies that are responsive to the specific needs of their communities to reduce racial and ethnic health disparities.

- 1) Expand and support the collection of REAL-D data
- 2) Meaningfully invest in community engagement to identify future strategies
- 3) Health Equity Policy Analyst to disrupt policy from maintaining racist outcomes
- 4) Increase health equity through language access
- 5) Increase community voice in the legislative process
- 6) Remove barriers to increase access and quality of care in BIPOC communities

Thank you for the consideration and for your service. I urge you to support HB 2337.

Corey Newhouse, Eugene Oregon