

March 19, 2021

Dear Chair Smith Warner and Members of the Committee,

My name is May Khadem. I am a health care provider in the Portland area with a background in public health. I am writing to request that you support HB2337. Racism is unquestionably a public health crisis in Oregon and in our nation. As a physician, I am witness to the numerous adverse health effects of racism. We know from abundant research that people of color, particularly African Americans have higher rates of chronic diseases, receive a lower quality of care within the health care system, and are subject to higher rates of adverse outcomes.

All our public institutions, our businesses, our social spaces, and even our individual interactions take place within racist structures carrying unconscious attitudes tainted by a culture of white supremacy. Such a culture ensures policies and systems that ensure power, privilege and resources remain in the hands of white men.

Oregon, in particular, has deep roots of racism. The Land Donation Act of 1850 made it legal to steal land from Native American Tribes. In 1887, Chinese miners were murdered without consequence. Laws were enacted to exclude Blacks from privileges granted to other citizens with lashing as punishment for violation. During World War II, Japanese internment camps excluded these citizens from human rights granted to other citizens. Red-lining has prevented the Black community from home ownership and limited educational opportunities. All of these create chronic stress with resulting chronic diseases such as high blood pressure, diabetes, heart disease, mental health problems and even cancer.

This bill finally highlights the need for urgent and intentional action to rectify these injustices and promotes some strategies and investments to address the health inequities that these systemic racist structures and policies have perpetuated.

As a physician, I am especially sensitized to the damage to physical, emotional and social well-being that racism causes. Especially at this time of the global pandemic when these negative outcomes are especially acute, I urge you to support HB2337.

With gratitude for your service,

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