



Board of Commissioners

Courthouse, Room 110
225 W. Olive Street
Newport, Oregon 97365
(541) 265-4100
FAX (541) 265-4176

February 22, 2021

House Committee on Health Care
Representative Rachel Prusak, Chair

Re: Support for HB 2337

Dear Chair Prusak and Members of the Committee:

The Lincoln County Board of Commissioners is pleased to add our voice to many others supporting HB 2337. It is vital to the well-being of all Oregonians, but especially those who are part of BIPOC communities, that Oregon join the many state and local jurisdictions in declaring racism to be a public health crisis.

HB 2377 accomplishes several important objectives: it recognizes the crisis and It acknowledges Oregon's racist history. Only by fully acknowledging that legacy can we learn from it and build a more equitable future for all Oregonians. Most significantly, it commits the state to ongoing data collection about racially-driven health disparities and makes targeted investments to address the problem.

There was growing momentum in this country to recognize racism as a public health crisis even before the COVID-19 pandemic. The pandemic has highlighted the disparities in our medical and economic systems that cause BIPOC individuals to shoulder a disproportionate share of the impact of the pandemic.

In Lincoln County, our largest single COVID-19 outbreak was in a seafood processing facility. We also had several smaller workplace outbreaks in businesses associated with the hospitality industry. People of color and people born outside of the United States are employed in Agriculture (including seafood processing) and hospitality jobs to a far greater extent than their numbers in the population. Fear of job loss, legal issues, language barriers, racism and other factors have made it more challenging for public health and other health partners to connect with this community for prevention, outbreak response, and vaccine planning and implementation.

We can never fully undo the impacts of generations of institutional racism, but HB 2337 represents an important acknowledgement of our past while also helping us move forward to a more just society for all Oregonians.

Thank you for your consideration.

A blue ink signature of Doug Hunt, written in a cursive style.

Doug Hunt, Chair

A blue ink signature of Claire Hall, written in a cursive style.

Claire Hall, Commissioner

A blue ink signature of Kaety Jacobson, written in a cursive style.

Kaety Jacobson, Commissioner