

Multnomah County Public Health Advisory Board

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March 23, 2021

House Committee on Rules
900 Court St. NE - Remote 170
Salem, Oregon 97301

Chair Smith Warner, Vice-Chairs Drazan and Holvy, and members of the committee,

The Multnomah County Public Health Advisory Board (MCPHAB) advises the Health Department's Public Health Division, focusing on promoting health equity and uplifting community voice. MCPHAB has been deeply committed to calling out both past and current harms stemming from individual, structural and institutional racism, and working to advance anti-racist policies that will improve the health of all members of our community. With this testimony, we are also submitting a copy of our recent [guest column in *The Oregonian*](#), emphasizing a desperate need for change.

Racism is a public health crisis. Addressing this, the root cause of violence, poverty and many other societal woes, is imperative instead of focusing on downstream impacts of racism.

Oregonians need your commitment to investing in the sustainable funding, rulemaking, implementation, and accountability that is essential to bringing about actual change in our systems and institutions. Those of us who care deeply about public health are watching the impacts of our stalled statewide Modernization of Public Health. Recommendations following the passage of HB 3100 in 2015 specified that investments up to \$100 million annually were required to enhance the existing system to meet the present need. Since then, Oregon has invested \$15 million, and the Governor's Recommended Budget (GRB) for 2021-23 slashes Oregon Health Authority's request for Modernization of Public Health funding from \$68.9 million to \$30 million. Such a partially fulfilled promise is insufficient to modernize our public health system and a partially fulfilled promise will be insufficient in addressing racism as a public health crisis.

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Some of the best minds and hearts from our communities came together to draft the right bill with the critical key provisions to do the job of dismantling structural racism and redirecting our systems and institutions toward promoting health equity. This legislative policy is our communities speaking to statewide leadership and institutions of power. Each and every one of those key provisions must be made whole, devoid of any hint of crippling compromise.

We urge you to pass HB 2337 and take concrete steps toward dismantling structural racism and promoting health equity. HB 2337 does this in many important ways:

- Prioritizing the acquisition and use of REAL-D data to depict a more accurate picture of community needs
- Providing additional culturally and linguistically responsive services across the state
- Adding both an Equity Coordinator and a Legislative Health Equity Policy Analyst focused on elevating community wisdom and taking on anti-racist policy design and implementation
- Piloting a mobile health program to lower barriers to access
- Creating space for community conversations via Oregon Advocacy Commission's commitment to creating organized spaces for dialogue.

Thank you,
The Multnomah County Public Health Advisory Board