

Date: 3/23/2021

Chair Smith Warner and Members of the Committee,

My name is Justin Soares and I am a business owner and property manager in Corvallis. I am writing to request your support for **HB2337**.

After even a cursory review of HB 2337 it is clear that racism is 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.
- Incidents of racism consistently experienced by Black, Indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC) communities and Tribes create racial disparities in social, health, economic, legal, and academic outcomes
- White supremacy was institutionalized through the development of policies and systems that ensure power, privilege and resources remain in the hands of white men
- Racism in Oregon has left a legacy of trauma from one generation to the next, impacting Oregon Tribes and BIPOC communities through a cumulative effect
- Oregon has deep roots of racism to include the Land Donation Act of 1850 that made it legal to steal land from Native American Tribes, the 1887 murder of Chinese miners, Black exclusionary laws with lashing as punishment, Japanese internment camps during WWII, segregation in education, and real estate red-lining that drove down values and reduced home ownership in the Black community
- 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
- Racism in Oregon and nationwide has created a situation that is untenable and where immediate action must be taken to mitigate further harm and violence against BIPOC Oregonians and Tribes.
- As public health professionals, we assert that this issue is not about politics. This issue is about people's lives and their health, and the fact that people are dying far earlier than they should, and that we must do a much better job of preventing that.

- In Oregon African Americans and American Indians and Alaska Natives experienced more years of potential life lost (YPLL) than any other race and ethnicity in the state (Oregon Death Certificate Data, 2016).
- Chronic illness is greater for many communities of color. For example, African Americans (38.9%), Pacific Islanders (36.1%), American Indians and Alaska Natives (33.4%), and Latinos (29.1%) are more likely to experience high blood pressure in this state. (Oregon Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System, Preliminary race reporting data file, 2015 – 2016).
- African American women are three to four times more likely to die from pregnancy-related complications, and people in rural areas of the U.S. are 64% more likely (Amnesty International, 2010).
- Communities of color are more likely to be uninsured (Oregon Health Insurance Survey, 2016).
- 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)
- Racial disparities in health among non poor African Americans and Hispanics: The role of acute and chronic discrimination. *Social Science and Medicine*, 199 (February 2018), p.167-180.
- 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).

It is abundantly clear to myself and my colleagues in the business sector here in Oregon that fundamental institutional racism is real and creates a wide disparity in the basic human rights and quality of life of our fellow BIPOC citizens.

Stand up and support support HB 2337.

Thank you for the consideration and for your service.

Sincerely,
Justin Soares
Corvallis, OR