

Chair Smith Warner and Members of the Committee,

For the record, my name is Tony Bellsmith. I am a family physician at Rosewood Family Health Center in Portland, OR. I am writing to request your support for HB2337.

HB 2337 declares racism 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. 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. 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). As a public health professional, I 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.

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.

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

Sincerely,
Tony Bellsmith, MD
(he/him)
Portland, OR