



April 6, 2021

Dear Chair Prusak, Vice Chairs Hayden and Salinas, Members of the Committee,

On behalf of NARAL Pro-Choice Oregon, we would like to share our support for HB 3159, the Data Justice Act, as included in the Governor's recommended budget.

At NARAL Pro-Choice Oregon, our advocacy is centered on defending and expanding access to the full spectrum of reproductive health care, especially for those who most often face barriers to reproductive freedom. We believe we must take an equity-focused approach to increasing access to quality, culturally-informed health care. We support efforts to improve health equity in our state, which we believe must be intentionally focused on the health disparities experienced by Black, Indigenous, Latinx, and other communities. We also work to advance critical intersectional policies and support the work of coalitions like the Oregon Health Equity Alliance, because we know that people in Oregon also need to access living wage jobs, programs and resources needed to raise a family in a healthy and safe environment.

It is critical that Oregon tackle the lack of information available necessary to measure and begin to address the unique experiences of communities most-impacted by barriers and health disparities. There are often major gaps in tangible evidence necessary to accurately reflect the health needs of BIPOC, LGBTQ+ people, people with disabilities, and other underserved populations in our state. This lack of identity data collected has proved to be a barrier to communities of color who have higher instances of COVID-19, due to historical socioeconomic inequities that are often the cause of health complications, and without information to understand these complex issues, with are unable to to

As advocates for public health, we assert that this issue is not about politics; this is about people's lives. Black women who are pregnant are "subject to a public health crisis that's been hiding in plain sight for the last 30 years. Following decades of decline, maternal deaths began to rise in the United States around 1990—a significant departure from the world's other affluent countries. By 2013, rates had more than doubled. More than half of these deaths and near deaths are from preventable causes, and a disproportionate number of the women suffering are black." **When accounting other factors such as age, social and economic class, Black women are three to four times more likely to die from pregnancy-related complications, as compared to white women.**<sup>1</sup> Until recently, Oregon lacked state data regarding race and maternal morbidity and mortality and very few culturally-specific resources exist to address the needs and concerns of Black women.

Without collecting data and creating an inclusive base we cannot expect healthy and equitable health outcomes. **Oregon needs accurate data in order to inform responsive and responsible public policy.** This data will allow Oregon to advance progressive and equitable healthcare standards. Supporting HB 3159 will help ensure all Oregonians will one day have

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<sup>1</sup> <https://powertodecide.org/news/dying-give-birth>



equal health access, and equal health outcomes, if the data we use to inform our essential programs reflects the real needs of real people in our state.

By passing HB 3159, Oregon can address health disparities by supporting providers to collect basic demographic information that can be shared with the Oregon Health Authority (OHA).

Sincerely,

Jeanine Morales  
Deputy Director, NARAL Pro-Choice Oregon