Coalition of
Communities of
Color

April 6, 2021

Chair Rachel Prusak
Vice-Chair Cedric Hayden
Vice-Chair Andrea Salinas
Members of the House Committee On Health Care

RE: HB 3159 – Data Justice Act

Chair Prusak, Vice-Chair Hayden, Vice-Chair Salinas, and members of the House Committee On Health Care,

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in strong support of HB 3159, the Data Justice Act, which will make significant strides towards addressing health disparities in our state by collecting disaggregated data on our most underserved populations, including Black, Indigenous, and other people of color (BIPOC) communities, LGBTQ+ people, and people with disabilities. We are Dr. Andres Lopez, Research Director, and Dr. Mira Mohsini, Senior Researcher at the Research Justice Institute (RJI), which is part of the Coalition of Communities of Color, an alliance of culturally specific community-based organizations with representation from African, African American, Latinx, Middle Eastern and North African, Native American, Pacific Islander, and Slavic communities in Oregon.

The RJI works with government agencies and community-based organizations to promote data justice to ensure that data accurately represents and makes visible the needs and strengths of communities of color in Oregon. These efforts are of critical importance for our member organizations and other community-based organizations that serve BIPOC populations because we understand that when our communities are undercounted and underrepresented, our capacity to advocate for access to resources, services, and opportunities is diminished.

We support HB 3159 because collecting more representative data is a necessary part of making decisions that advance equity and justice. The COVID-19 crisis has illustrated how the absence of disaggregated data on our already most underserved communities exacerbates health disparities. Large swathes of our population have been and remain invisible to decision makers and as a result, they are not receiving the services, care, and culturally and linguistically responsive resources that are so critical during times of crisis.

By requiring that healthcare providers and insurers collect patients detailed gender and sexuality data and by creating a state system to maintain this data, we will be better positioned to understand and address the deep intersecting health disparities that existed long before the pandemic and how different folks from different backgrounds experience inequalities in Oregon. As we recover, we must take meaningful action to address the impacts of COVID-19 and beyond.

It is urgent that we understand and meet the needs of those who have been systematically marginalized by decades of harmful data practices. We all have an obligation to to take the actions and make the investments necessary to change this system to uplift our communities. With the Data Justice Act, we have a historic opportunity to remedy these past harms and ensure that we know who our communities are and how best we can serve them.

On behalf of the Research Justice Institute and the Coalition of Communities of Color, we urge you to take action by supporting HB 3159.

Thank you,

Andres Lopez

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