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**To: House Committee on Housing**  
**From: Sybil Hebb, Oregon Law Center**  
**Date: January 26<sup>th</sup>, 2021**  
**Re: HB 2703**

Chair Fahey, Vice-Chairs Campos and Morgan, and members of the committee:

On behalf of the Oregon Law Center, I submit this written testimony in support of House Bill 2703, which would require that real estate continuing education courses include information on fair housing laws. Thank you to the bill sponsors and proponents for bringing this bill forward.

The Oregon Law Center (OLC) is a state-wide non-profit law firm whose mission is to achieve justice for low-income communities of Oregon by providing a full range of the highest quality civil legal services. Helping families maintain safe, stable housing is a critical part of our work. Without stable housing, it is difficult or impossible to hold down a job, keep children in school, access neighborhood amenities, and stay healthy. Across the state, in urban and rural areas, access to safe, stable, and affordable housing has become one of the most important issues facing our clients.

One important way to ensure housing stability is to provide pathways to affordable and accessible homeownership in neighborhoods of opportunity. But due to a history of structural racism in the form of zoning exclusion, gentrification, lack of access to capital, and displacement, homeownership opportunities have been denied to Oregonians of color. Black Oregonians are twice as likely to live in poverty, two times more likely than white people to rent their homes instead of owning them<sup>1</sup>, and three times more likely to experience homelessness because of the impact of racism in our housing and employment systems. We greatly appreciate the work of the Joint Task Force on Addressing Racial Disparities in Home Ownership in highlighting and beginning to address these issues.

The Oregon Real Estate Licensing Agency already requires initial training in fair housing laws, but this bill will provide an important step forward in making this requirement a core part of ongoing continuing educational requirements for licensees. Continuing education requirements make an important statement about priorities and expected standards of practice. These requirements will help ensure that licensees maintain familiarity with the critical importance of state and federal fair housing laws for Oregon communities.

Thank you for your work and for your commitment to Oregonians.

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<sup>1</sup> [https://www.oregonlegislature.gov/citizen\\_engagement/Reports/2019-JARDHO-Addressing%20Barriers%20to%20Home%20Ownership%20for%20People%20of%20Color%20in%20Oregon.pdf](https://www.oregonlegislature.gov/citizen_engagement/Reports/2019-JARDHO-Addressing%20Barriers%20to%20Home%20Ownership%20for%20People%20of%20Color%20in%20Oregon.pdf)