



VOICES UNITED.
OPPORTUNITY REIMAGINED.

February 2, 2022

House Committee on Health Care
900 Court Street NE
Salem, OR 97301

RE: Support for HB 4052

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

Our Children Oregon's (OCO) mission is advancing equitable policymaking and whole-child advocacy statewide to ensure our children and youth have what they need, regardless of their race or where they live, to thrive by activating meaningful change for children and families. OCO is the result of the merger between two historic Oregon non-profits: The Children's Trust Fund of Oregon and Children First for Oregon. We collect, analyze, and elevate data and research that, alongside lived experience, drives conversations in support of Oregon's future. We partner alongside ~120 statewide organizations through The Children's Agenda to uplift and advocate for community-driven, equity-centered policies and investments that will improve the lives of Oregon's children and families.

Declaring racism a public health crisis is a 2022 Children's Agenda priority. With the passage of HR 6 (a previous Children's Agenda priority), racism has been officially declared a public health crisis in our state. It is now critical to take action by identifying investments and strategies to meaningfully address physical and mental health inequities among Oregon's Black, Indigenous, People of Color (BIPOC) communities and Tribes.

Nationally, the COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated health inequities among different race and ethnic groups. Due to institutionalized racist systems, chronic diseases are more prevalent in Black, Indigenous, People of Color (BIPOC) communities. Moreover, COVID-19 has put Black, Indigenous, People of Color (BIPOC) individuals with underlying health conditions at greater risk to contract the virus and experience severe symptoms. Yet, Black, Indigenous, People of Color (BIPOC) communities are still more likely to face economic, geographical, and linguistic barriers to access quality and culturally competent care.

The Children's Agenda

is a broad slate of equitable investments and policy solutions to meet the holistic needs of Oregon children, youth, and their families.



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For children and families of color in our state, health disparities have been long-existent and largely tied to downstream impacts of systemic and institutional racism. For instance, 39% of Black Oregonian children were not up-to-date on their childhood immunizations in 2019, at a rate more than 10% higher than their white counterparts. As well, Black and Native American pregnant mothers in Oregon receive prenatal care at nearly 20% lower a rate than white mothers, which leads to increased risks for both mothers and newborns. When certain segments of our child population are left with fewer opportunities to maintain and improve their health outcomes, Oregon communities as a whole suffer as a result.

We support HB 4052 to not only acknowledge Oregon's racist history and its current policies that perpetuate systemic racism that cause harm toward Black, Indigenous and People of Color (BIPOC) Oregonians, but to go beyond a declaration and identify and find specific strategies to begin addressing the crisis.

The key strategies to address this crisis include:

- **Increasing access and quality of care in Black, Indigenous, People of Color (BIPOC) communities through culturally and linguistically appropriate mobile health units**
- **Meaningfully invest in community engagement efforts to identify future strategies through support of statewide affinity groups**

Nationally and statewide, systemic racism has created a situation that is untenable. Immediate action must be taken to mitigate further harm and violence against Black, Indigenous, People of Color (BIPOC) Oregonians and Indigenous tribes. Declaring racism as a public health crisis with the implementation of key strategies will provide Oregon a pathway towards an equitable future. Thank you for your consideration and your service. We urge you to support HB 4052.

From the Our Children Oregon Team,

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View the 2022 Children's Agenda at
www.ourchildrenoregon.org/2022-childrens-agenda