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Oregon Faith Movement

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## Testimony In Support of SB 1579 February 10, 2022

Chair Taylor, Vice-Chair Knopp, and members of the committee,

I am writing to express Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon's support for SB 1579. SB 1579 would provide critical funding to culturally specific organizations to increase access to wealth building strategies that would address the significant disparities in economic equity among individuals and families of color, and businesses owned by communities of color. We stand with other advocates in affirming the need for Oregon to expand its commitment to these marginalized groups.

Working with over 150 congregations, organizations, and interfaith partners, Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon (EMO) strives to envision communities of faith in partnership creating a more peaceful, just, sustainable, and compassionate world. EMO works with and for Oregonians through dialogue, advocacy, and direct service, serving hundreds of thousands of clients each year.

The United States has a long history of systemic racism, including redlining, that has systematically marginalized people of color in housing access. People of color have also been disproportionately and unfairly targeted, penalized, and incarcerated through the criminal justice system, worsening these housing disparities and creating lasting barriers to their ability to access safe, stable, and affordable housing.

Oregon is no exception to these disparities: approximately 35% of Black people own their homes, compared to 65% of white people.<sup>1</sup> Three out of four low-income households in Oregon pay more than half of their income towards rent, leaving too few resources for food, medicine, or utilities. An emergency of just several hundred dollars can lead to these households experiencing homelessness.

SB 1579 is a necessary step to addressing this problem in Oregon. Investing in culturally specific organizations will help narrow this gap by providing crucial services to increase the intergenerational wealth of historically marginalized peoples. Every dollar put into this program is an investment that will pay off down the line as Oregon battles its homelessness crisis.

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<sup>1</sup> Oregon Legislature; <https://bit.ly/34v8cnf>

As people of faith, we avow the inherent dignity of each individual person. We are called to stand with those who have been historically marginalized. SB 1579 is an opportunity for Oregon to affirm its commitment to fair housing practices and begin to right the wrongs of inequitable housing access.

We urge passage of SB 1579, and extend our gratitude to the individuals and organizations who helped craft this bill. We thank you for your work and for your consideration of this essential legislation.

In partnership,

Michael Ciccarello  
Public Policy Associate  
Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon