



Date: February 3, 2023
To: Senate Committee on Finance and Revenue
From: Ronnie Strode, policy analyst for the Urban League of Portland
Re: Support for Adding race/ethnicity to Oregon Income Tax Form 2023, SB 1

Chair Meek, Vice-Chair Boquist, and Members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of Senate Bill 1. My name is Ronnie Strode, and I am submitting this testimony on behalf of the Urban League of Portland. The Urban League of Portland is one of Oregon's oldest civil rights and social service organizations, empowering African Americans and others to achieve equality in education, employment, health, economic security, and quality of life. We do this by investing in stable housing; through workforce development; community health; education and well-being; for our youth, adults, and seniors. Our culturally specific programs and services, combined with our powerful advocacy and civic engagement, empowers Black communities to thrive across Oregon and SW Washington.

SB 1 adds an optional form to Oregon's personal income taxes asking for people to select up to three racial and ethnic identifiers from nearly 40 definitions. These definitions will mirror the REAL-D (Race, Ethnicity, Language, and Disability) options developed by the Oregon Health Authority through a multi-year process in collaboration with community-based organizations. This data will help everyone – lawmakers, researchers, advocates, and the public – better understand how our tax structure and tax expenditures are distributed between different racial and ethnic groups throughout our state. Understanding the extent to which the tax system, and particular tax provisions, impact racial disparities can help us find ways to reduce those disparities.

The data generated by SB 1 will only be used for statistical analysis. Only the Research Section at the Oregon Department of Revenue, the Legislative Revenue Office, and the Oregon Office of Economic Analysis will have access to the data collected by this bill. The data will be kept separate from tax auditors to eliminate any risk it could be used to assess stricter audits on people of color in the state. The legislation also requires this separation to be reviewed by the Joint Committee on Information Management and Technology regularly.

For the Urban League of Portland, this would be an additional tool of accountability and transparency. By having access to such data, we would be able to utilize the information to review policy that is being proposed, identify the impacts to our communities (intended or not), to inform the policy we develop in partnership with community, and to organize. How can we track progress if we're unable to measure it, especially when it comes to our community and their needs?

Please support SB 1.

Respectfully,



Urban League
of Portland

Empowering Communities. Changing Lives.

Ronnie D Strode III

Ronnie Strode
Policy Analyst
Urban League of Portland
Portland, OR 97227
Email: rstrode@ulpdx.org