



February 23, 2023

Re: Support for HB 2650 - Equitable Workgroups

Chair Grayber, Vice-Chairs Lewis and Tran, and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in strong support of HB 2650 to ensure equity in legislative workgroups and task forces. My name is Jenny Lee, and I am the Deputy Director at the Coalition of Communities of Color, an alliance of culturally specific community-based organizations dedicated to collective action for racial justice.

HB 2650 will require specific levels of participation from those directly impacted by whatever policy is being discussed, and from community-based organizations who work to meet their community's needs and amplify their strengths. Individuals with lived experience are issue area experts and provide critical input and insight to shape public policy. But they are all too often an afterthought in the policymaking process. We know that the policymaking process and participation in workgroups and task forces can be inaccessible for the vast majority of Oregonians. This is especially true for communities that have been historically marginalized.

Not only is it smart and democratic to have people who would be directly impacted at the table, but it is also empowering when community members are heard. This leads to shared influence, increases civic engagement, and builds relationships between lawmakers and the people they represent. Most importantly, it helps create more equitable and effective policies that will better serve all Oregonians. The levels of participation set out in this bill are critical because we need more than one community's perspective represented in policymaking spaces. Having multiple impacted individuals and community-based organizations will help reduce tokenization and the unachievable expectation that any one individual or organization is capable of representing every marginalized community.

Community members also deserve compensation for their participation in policymaking spaces, especially when they are taking time away from their other obligations. We note that the per diem system that would be applied here does not result in people losing other public benefits (e.g., SNAP or the Oregon Health Plan). The solution in our bill will prevent such benefit loss.

Oregon makes better policy when more voices are at the table. This bill will ensure that all workgroups and task forces are equitable in their creation and facilitation. We hope that you will pass HB 2650 to create stronger policies that meet the needs of all Oregonians.

Thank you,

Jenny Lee
Deputy Director
Coalition of Communities of Color