

**Oregon Physicians for Social Responsibility  
Statement in Support of HB 2918 and HB 2925  
Racism is a Public Health Crisis**

February 23, 2023

Oregon Physicians for Social Responsibility (OPSR) joins the OR Commission on Asian and Pacific Islander Affairs, OR Commission on Hispanic Affairs, OR Commission on Black Affairs, OR Commission for Women, and other organizations concerned with assuring health equity in support of HB 2918 and HB 2925. These bills will assure adequate funding and allot the time needed to address the deep health inequities that are the result of racism.

OPSR was a supporter of the initial legislation in 2022 (HB 4052). While this was welcomed and applauded, the initial legislation did not adequately fund the pilot project aimed at addressing health disparities, nor did it allow the time needed for focus groups so that the voices of those impacted could be heard in order to plan for interventions that would be both culturally relevant and impactful. This is why the current legislation is so important.

As health professionals, we take a public health approach and look “upstream” to the root causes of health problems. The COVID-19 pandemic [shines a spotlight](#) on long existing systemic health disparities in our nation and in Oregon. People of Color in the US have been more than three times as likely as White people to contract COVID-19, and the death rates from the virus is about twice as high in Communities of Color in comparison to that in White communities. [Structural racism negatively impacts](#) socio-economic levels, access to education and health care, environmental and housing conditions, discrimination in employment and so many other factors known as the social determinants of health. The health consequences of factors attributed to structural racism include higher rates of chronic illnesses such as heart disease, diabetes, asthma, less favorable birth outcomes, and others. Reaching for health equity requires nothing short of an upstream public health approach.

The common goal we believe we all share is for an equitable society where all people and communities thrive. The roots of racism are deep. Effective interventions, informed and led by those most impacted, require the funding and time commitments provided in the current proposed legislation. OPSR, an organization of health professionals from all fields of health and mental health, urges the Oregon Legislature to approve HB 2918 and HB 2925.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Maxine Fookson, RN, MN (OPSR Board Member)

Oregon Physicians for Social Responsibility

The US affiliate of International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War, Recipient of the 1985 Nobel Peace Prize

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