

TO: Chair Manning, Jr., Vice Chair Thatcher, and other members of the Senate Committee On Veterans, Emergency Management, Federal and World Affairs

RE: SB 776 - SUPPORT

The context for my testimony is (1) I am European-American; (2) in researching my family history, I have learned that my Pennsylvania ancestors owned at least one slave.

Slavery helped make the United States one of the most economically prosperous countries in the world in the 19th century. Most of the country's European-American inhabitants directly reaped these rewards, as do their descendants, even today.

From 1619 to 1865, America's slaves were unpaid, and their families torn asunder. The legacy of that horrible maltreatment left African-American families separated and destitute. The social and economic consequences of slavery have been documented, in terms of relative family income, education, and opportunities to acquire wealth.

Was this the right thing for European-Americans to do 150 years ago? No. Are reparations in order as a remedy? Yes.

I am a member of the Portland area chapter of a national organization, Coming To The Table, (comingtothetable.org), which links present-day descendants of slaves and present-day descendants of enslavers. The goal is to produce racial healing. I am also a member of the Racial Justice Committee at Portland Mennonite Church.

The concept of reparations is hardly novel, Japanese-Americans, and other groups have already been the recipients of reparations. [Slaveholders got reparations, too.](#)

I applaud Chief Sponsor Senator Frederick, in whose district I live, and all who are taking leadership in this important initiative. A task force is a significant first step to deciding what reparations could be made, to whom, and by whom.

Please vote yes on SB 776. Thank you.

Sylvia E. Shirk
Portland 97217