

March 1, 2023

Testimony in Support of Oregon Senate Bill 776

I'd like to extend many thanks to Senators Frederick, Jama, Manning, and Woods and Representative Nelson for their leadership on this critical legislation.

I'm offering my support for Bill 776 as a white person. A person who knows that I too, am responsible for reparations on so many levels.

There have been so many opportunities to repair our shocking and maniacal history as it relates to slavery and black lives. 400 years ago until today and if we're not careful, it will be our future. There is no doubt, and no argument anymore and never was that this past that all of us have inherited in one way, or another, on one side or another, lives with us today and we are still responsible for the degree of repair that has become an absolute national crisis and embarrassment. It is far past time we address the severe harms of Oregon's racist history, and current racist times especially for Oregonian residents, friends, taxpayers, workers, retirees and builders of this state, our neighbors, and family members who are Black / Brown/ African-American and Indigenous / Original People. This bill is an important step, an incredible opportunity, and responsibility towards justice and healing not only for the people harmed and their descendants, but for all of us. If we do not intentionally demonstrate that we take care of all Oregonians equitably, then all of us must live with the build up of neglecting the truths and realities, more psychological stress of injustice and the threat of future harm and the continued rupture in our societal democratic fabric.

Intentionally uninformed people say reparations are not possible or feasible, not our responsibility, and that the country cannot afford them. This is simply not true and we cannot afford to continue to neglect a population of peoples who have been patient, active and giving community members and descendants of terrorism of the likes of the criminally insane. There are countless examples worldwide, including reparations paid by Germany after WW II; and there are also examples of the U.S. government paying reparations, going hundreds of years back in American history. Here are but two:

1. "In 1782, as the Revolutionary War raged on and the design of what would become the Great Seal of the United States was finalized, a Black woman named Belinda Sutton petitioned the Massachusetts legislature for reparations from her enslaver and won."

(<https://royallhouse.org/slavery/belinda-sutton-and-her-petitions/>)

2. "The Civil Liberties Act of 1988 gave surviving Japanese Americans reparations [\$20,000 each] and a formal apology by President Reagan for their incarceration during World War II."

(<https://www.nationalww2museum.org/war/articles/redress-and-reparations-japanese-american-incarceration>)

Numerous other states and over a dozen U.S. cities have already forged ahead in establishing reparations commissions; some are already paying reparations. California and Illinois are great excellent examples and can serve as a roadmap for Oregon.

We don't bat an eye when giving millions of dollars in annual tax breaks to corporations that often don't need them. Why do we not prioritize funding basic justice centered on a human's well-being instead individual and corporate greed? It is financially possible and unquestionably

necessary to pay reparations; it's a matter of applying our democratic principles in the truest manner. It is no longer a decision to argue with, and as representatives of Oregon's decision making government body we hold you responsible for representing everyone no longer on terms of opposing reparations. So far our track record does not look good as it relates to reparations and we have an opportunity here.

It is past time we pay reparations, as a state and a country, that we're taking matters into our own hands, frustrated with the shamefully slow pace of government. Reparations are already happening in Oregon, as proven by countless mutual aid organizations past and present and groups of citizens such as those with the Portland Housing Solidarity Project redistributing wealth on their own. Be a part of this change and celebrate the leadership you have providing this piece of legislation to you for your support without argument.

Please support Oregon Senate Bill 776 and to debate fellow lawmakers the same racist points as it relates to responsibility. That is no longer an argument and never was and it needs to stop showing up. It is a sign of unwillingness and fragility in moving forward with this necessary change. Let's get started on the basics of state government repair and join other states and countries who know that their societal fabric and future depends on the implementation of reparations in many forms now!

Thank you for allowing me this testimony,
Max Micozzi