

**TRAVIS NELSON**  
**STATE REPRESENTATIVE**  
HOUSE DISTRICT 44  
NORTH/NORTHEAST PORTLAND



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES  
**Testimony in Support of House Bill 3313**

March 14, 2023

Chair Fahey, Vice-Chairs Breese-Iverson and Kropf, and members of the committee,

I am Travis Nelson, State Representative for House District 44 (North and Northeast Portland). I am the first openly LGBTQ+ Black legislator in the 164-year history of our great state and serve as a Commissioner for the Oregon Commission on Black Affairs. Committee members, I am here today in support of House Bill 3313. This bill would require that the Oregon Advocacy Commissions Office employ at least one paid intern for each Commission.

The Oregon Advocacy Commissions Office (OACO) oversees the Commission on Hispanic Affairs, the Commission on Black Affairs, the Commission for Women, and the Commission on Asian and Pacific Islander Affairs. These Commissions are all integral parts of Oregon's legislative advocacy community. They are crucial for elevating and highlighting causes, concerns, and opportunities for Oregon's marginalized populations. It is long past time that we invested in the commissions so that they can properly advocate for communities that have been an afterthought far too often.

Interns are a special part of the administrative process for the legislature and the agencies that work with us. Working as an intern is a great way to gain experience in your chosen field, and to make business connections you can continue to foster after the internship has completed. And it's not just the person filling the internship that benefits; it's also the employer. We all know that our offices benefit from hiring an intern to help with constituent emails, policy research, and district outreach. The OACO does important work and does not have the staffing capacity for all of the duties they are responsible for completing. We need to be supporting their work by appropriating funding for each commission to onboard *at least* one intern each. This will help the commissions better serve Oregonians across the state and to help make their voices and concerns heard for us here in the Capitol.

Requiring OACO to hire paid interns isn't just necessary, it's the right thing to do. No one should be expected to work part-time or full-time without compensation. Interns work on detailed, complex projects and should be compensated accordingly. The cost of living, as we are all aware, is on a steep, upward trajectory and we need to ensure that people *want* to work with the commissions. The commissions will lose out on talented individuals if they are not able to guarantee pay for their work. And that hurts everyone.

Making funding available for these internships will also help Oregon Advocacy Commissions Office seek out talented applicants from communities of color, not just in the Portland metro area, but across the entire state. We need to hire and train the next generation of legislators, advocates, and staff, especially those from rural, low-income, and communities of color. We only succeed when we bring everyone to the table. And we can start by securing funding for paid internships with the Oregon commissions. As I like to say, show me your budget and I'll show you your values. We'll show our values – and do right by our constituents – by passing this bill. I urge you to pass this bill out of committee.

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Travis Nelson". The signature is fluid and cursive.

State Representative Travis Nelson  
House District 44, North/NE Portland