

Submitter: Tyler Kershaw

On Behalf Of:

Committee: House Committee On Rules

Measure, Appointment or Topic: HR3

Chair Grayber, Vice Chair Munoz, Vice Chair Elmer, and members of the committee,

My name is Tyler Kershaw, but to my peers in the Drag Community in Oregon and beyond, I am known as Ty VanHelsing. I served as the 44th Rose Emperor of The Imperial Sovereign Rose Court of Portland, Oregon. I write this testimony today, to urge your support of HR3, honoring the history of Black Drag in the State of Oregon.

As we honor Black History Month, it is essential to recognize the contributions of Black Drag Artists who have shaped Oregon's cultural, artistic, and activist landscapes. For generations, Black Drag Artists have utilized their platforms to challenge oppression, redefine gender norms, and create spaces of resilience and celebration for both the LGBTQIA2S+ and Black communities. From historic underground ballroom scenes to contemporary performances that amplify Black Queer Voices, these artists have encouraged creativity, resistance, and community empowerment. Their contributions extend beyond mere entertainment—they are storytellers, activists, and changemakers who have fought for visibility, civil rights, and social justice.

Recognizing Black Drag History means acknowledging the intersections of race, gender identity, and sexual orientation in Oregon's history. It entails celebrating those who dared to exist authentically despite systemic barriers and who continue to inspire new generations. It also means confronting Oregon's deeply racist past. Founded as a state that explicitly excluded Black residents in its original constitution, Oregon has a long history of discriminatory policies, racial segregation, and white supremacist activity. For much of its history, Black Oregonians faced housing discrimination, economic barriers, and racial violence. The resilience of Black Communities—despite these challenges—has been central to shaping the state's culture, activism, and progress.

This recognition is not just about the past—it's about uplifting the present and future contributions of Black Drag Artists in Oregon while ensuring that their impact is never erased or overlooked.

Honoring Black Drag History is honoring Black History.

I strongly urge the honoring and recognition of Black Drag History.

Sincerely,

Tyler Kershaw

aka

Ty VanHelsing

Rose Emperor XLIV

The Imperial Sovereign Rose Court of Portland, OR