

February 19, 2025
Re: House Bill 2995

Dear Chair Tran, Vice-Chairs Grayber and Lewis, and Members of the House Committee on Emergency Management, General Government, and Veterans,

The Oregon Commission on Black Affairs supports House Bill 2995, which establishes the Task Force on Reparations to study and develop proposals for financial and nonfinancial remedies for the past and current injustices that have affected African-American lives and livelihoods.

Reparations, in this way, serve as a way to compensate for the numerous human rights violations imposed on the lives and livelihoods of Black and African-American Oregonians. Many people consider reparations only to be defined as a compensation plan to repair the harms of slavery. They miss the inhuman treatment post-slavery policies like voter suppression, housing displacement, redlining, and uncompensated employment, along with other systemic policies and practices that oppress underserved communities; much of this list continues today.

Beginning in 1526, over 15 million enslaved Africans were subjected to forced labor to establish the American economic system. Oregon's founding as an exclusionary state for Black people is a dark part of its history. In 1844, the provisional government passed laws banning Black residents, enforcing compliance with whippings of "not less than twenty nor more than thirty-nine stripes" every six months for those who stayed. These violent policies aimed to deter Black settlement and left lasting inequities that persist today, underscoring the need for reparations to address these historical injustices.

Compensation isn't just giving money without recognition of the harms of dehumanizing people based on race — the recognition, repair, and restitution of the harm of racial injustice, colonization, and the denial of fundamental human rights define reparations.

We fully support HB 2995, which recognizes one of Oregon's most marginalized racial groups and addresses the needs of all Oregonians.

Sincerely,

Oregon Commission on Black Affairs

