

Chair and Members of the Committee,

Sponsors: Representative Nelson, Senator Frederick, and Senator Manning,

My name is Buchi Asemota, and I am honored to submit this testimony in strong support of House Bill 2995, which seeks to establish the Task Force on Reparations for Oregonians of African American descent. As an African immigrant, a proud Portland resident, the CEO of a nonprofit dedicated to serving marginalized communities, and the chair of the Oregon Commission on Black Affairs, I am deeply invested in advancing justice and equity for all Oregonians.

Oregon's history, while rich in many ways, also bears the indelible scars of systemic racism and exclusionary policies. From Black exclusion laws enshrined in the state's original constitution to the redlining practices that segregated neighborhoods and deprived Black families of generational wealth, the legacy of discrimination against African Americans in Oregon is undeniable. These policies not only undermined the economic and social well-being of Black Oregonians but also entrenched racial inequities that persist to this day.

As an African immigrant who moved to the United States at the age of 11, I have had the unique perspective of witnessing systemic inequities both as an outsider looking in and as someone who has directly faced the challenges of racial prejudice. My work through Our Streets, a Portland-based nonprofit I co-founded during the height of the Black Lives Matter movement, has further reinforced my understanding of the urgent need for structural change. We see every day how systemic barriers have left Black Oregonians disproportionately affected by poverty, housing insecurity, and limited access to resources.

The time for Oregon to take meaningful steps toward reconciliation and repair is long overdue. House Bill 2995 is not just about addressing past wrongs, it's about creating a just and equitable future. By establishing this task force, Oregon can comprehensively study the enduring impacts of systemic racism and develop actionable proposals for both financial and nonfinancial reparations. It also provides an opportunity to educate the public about our shared history and engage communities in envisioning remedies that honor the dignity and humanity of African Americans in our state.

As we consider this legislation, it is crucial to acknowledge the current political climate, where divisive rhetoric and policies continue to deepen racial disparities. The rise of hate crimes, emboldened by national leadership that has often stoked the flames of division, is a sobering reminder of why state-level initiatives like HB 2995 are so critical. Oregon has the chance to lead by example, demonstrating a commitment to equity and justice that transcends political divides.

This task force is not just about healing the wounds of the past but about setting a precedent for the future. Reparations can take many forms, from direct financial compensation to education, housing, and healthcare investments. They are a tangible acknowledgment that

Black lives matter and that the systemic harms inflicted over centuries require intentional, corrective action.

As an immigrant, I am deeply aware of the privilege of opportunity, but I am also painfully aware of how systems of oppression continue to marginalize Black individuals and families. Reparations are not about division or blame; they are about accountability, repair, and the collective responsibility we share in building a more equitable Oregon.

I urge you to support House Bill 2995 and to stand on the right side of history. This is an opportunity for Oregon to lead with courage, to acknowledge the wrongs of the past, and to lay the foundation for a future where equity is not just an aspiration but a reality. Thank you for your time and for considering this vital legislation.

Sincerely,



Buchi Asemota
CEO, Our Streets