



February 23, 2025
RE: House Bill 2995

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

Oregon Black Pioneers supports House Bill 2995, which would establish a Task Force on Reparations to study and develop proposals for financial and nonfinancial remedies for the past and current injustices committed against African American individuals and communities in Oregon.

Oregon Black Pioneers is the only statewide organization dedicated to preserving and presenting the history of people of African descent in Oregon. The accumulated sources in our research archive demonstrate the extent to which historical racism, disenfranchisement, and displacements have harmed, and continue to harm, Black Oregonians.

Beginning with the Provisional Government era, Oregon legislators passed laws which prohibited the settlement of African Americans with the exemption of those held as slaves. Laws passed between 1844-1859 further restricted civil rights and suffrage for Black men and women in Oregon. This state-sanctioned Black exclusion and harassment occurred at a time when less than 1% of Oregon's population was Black.

Subsequent generations saw Oregon adopt Jim Crow policies of segregation and employment barriers. Redlining and other discriminatory housing practices prohibited African Americans from building generational wealth through home ownership, even for military veterans. Underinvested neighborhoods where Black families were forced to live became easy targets for demolition. Black residences and businesses in Portland and Eugene were sacrificed for public infrastructure projects.

Oregon's Black population was never given an equal chance to grow proportionally with Oregon's White population during the 19th century. The Black community's legal and social gains during the 20th century were undercut by "urban renewal" actions and racially biased policy decisions. It is time for the State of Oregon to conduct a full analysis of the extent of these historical harms and take appropriate action to offer restitution to Black citizens affected by these harms.

On behalf of Oregon Black Pioneers, I strongly urge you to vote in favor of the establishment of this Task Force.

Sincerely,

Zachary Stocks
Executive Director

OREGON BLACK PIONEERS