

Feb. 24, 2025

Re: HB 2995

www.bipocparamedics.org

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

I am writing to express my strong support for HB 2995, which proposes the establishment of the Task Force on Reparations. This legislation represents a critical step toward addressing the historical and systemic injustices endured by Black Oregonians.

As a paramedic with five years of experience in healthcare, including two years as a 911 responder in Multnomah County, I have witnessed firsthand the profound impact of racial disparities in our medical system. I am one of only a few Black paramedics in the county, and often, I am the sole Black medical provider my patients encounter—from the moment they call 911, through their transport to the hospital, and during their discharge. In those instances where my patient is Black, I frequently see a wave of relief wash over them, even when a room full of other responders is present. This reaction underscores the deep significance of representation in healthcare.

Despite receiving annual cultural sensitivity and awareness training, we continue to see that Black patients experience poorer care, worse outcomes, and are less likely to seek emergency medical assistance.

The late Charles Ray Jordan's words resonate with me deeply, especially as I reflect on my experiences in emergency response. He once said, "And because I am that one...that puts a lot of pressure on. And I think it's a lot of pressure on any Black man who's honest and candid with himself, if he functions in Oregon." For me, this quote captures the weight of what it feels like to be the only Black person in a room during a crisis.

HB 2995 offers a pathway for healing, by acknowledging the traumas of the past and using that understanding to guide the work we do today. Reparations is not just about financial compensation or symbolic gestures; it is about accountability, integrity, and addressing the deep health inequities that continue to affect Black communities.

Reparations can take many forms. It can involve ensuring equal access to healthcare careers for Black individuals, actively recruiting more Black healthcare providers, and ensuring that 911 calls from predominantly Black neighborhoods receive the same swift response as calls from other areas. It can mean investigating and addressing the disturbing disparity in maternal health outcomes, where Black women in Oregon die during pregnancy and childbirth at rates far higher than their white counterparts.

These issues are interconnected, and acknowledging the problem is only the beginning. We must commit to identifying, analyzing, and addressing these disparities with intentionality and effort. That is the essence of reparations: to hold ourselves accountable and work toward lasting equity.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Nicholas Hayes

BIPOC Paramedics of Portland



BIPOC Paramedics of Portland  
Equity in Emergency Care