

Submitter: Esme Cophy  
On Behalf Of: Portland DSA  
Committee: House Committee On Emergency Management, General Government, and Veterans  
Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB2995

First, much thanks to Representative Travis Nelson for bringing this bill that intends form a commission addressing the systemic oppression experienced by African American Oregonians. This task force commitment to studying and developing both financial and nonfinancial reparations is extremely important especially at a time such as this. Education has always been an important tool for combating the ignorance that produces a racist worldview. In support of this bill, it is vitally important to be specific on what repair means. It's important that the education system includes the history of African Americans even before enslavement because our history did not start with slavery, it was just disrupted. The education system must focus on providing students, especially African Americans a sense of the true horrors of enslavement and its devastation on our enslaved ancestors and the continent. Honoring the Maafa - a Kiswahili word that means "great tragedy" or "horrific tragedy", referring to the period called the Middle Passage or TransAtlantic Slave Trade. During that time, millions of captives from the continent of Africa were taken captive, persecuted, beaten, separated from their families and forced into enslavement and free labor. Finally, recognizing the Maafa and the entire scope of enslavement of Africans will be the start to declare never again similar to the lessons of the Holocaust. Expanding the scope of enslavement will help people to recognize the devastating legacy that touched all of the Americas and the Afro-atlantic world. African history pre colonialism must be considered in what is taught as world history to ensure pride in where our ancestors came from. To bridge the connection to the continent, the state must provide funds for those who request DNA kits from African Ancestry to help recover what enslavement sought to destroy, our connections to the motherland. Furthermore, Oregon must be honest through the education system about its efforts to further subjugate African Americans with their redlining, sundown towns, gentrification, and exclusionary laws against African Americans and people of color. Honoring figures such as York, Pioneer Black Portlanders, and the Portland Black Panthers founder Kent Ford will help bring awareness to our constant struggle for liberation to this day. Lastly, it is my hope that this commission will take economic justice seriously for Black Portlanders as a form of reparations. We would need jobs programs, free education opportunities, scholarships , and financial assistance .

Thank you for your time,  
Esme