

Submitter: Cecilia Wolfe

On Behalf Of:

Committee: House Committee On Emergency Management, General Government, and Veterans

Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB2995

I write today in support of HB 2995 to take the very early step of establishing a task force to research and make proposals around financial reparations for Black Oregonians that are long overdue. But we have the tools we need to start reparations towards Black communities. One step of many that we can take.

Black Americans were denied reparations post-emancipation after the civil war. Then they faced generations of red-lining, racist discrimination, gentrification of historic neighborhoods, brutal police violence, and more. Oregon is particularly complicit in this racist history that has far-reaching ramifications for the financial, mental, physical, and spiritual wellbeing of Black Oregonians today. It was once illegal to be Black and live in Oregon. We still have legislatively entrenched racist policies. Black Oregonians are pushed out of their neighborhoods, face disparities in over-policing and arrests, economic and health disparities, and others.

At the same time, Black communities are consistently some of the most innovative and community-oriented. Countless programs and organizations have been created by Black communities for Black communities. Black businesses keep opening. Black artists keep creating. Black children keep growing and developing.

The Oregon legislature has a duty to be accountable for its institutions past atrocities, and to make material strides towards repair work with Black communities. In current financial crises, economic equity and reparations are a critical piece of that work. A task force that includes and centers Black communities voices and input, and makes tangible progress towards making reparations a reality is crucial.

Vote yes on HB 2995.

Cecilia Wolfe