

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

I am a fourth generation Black Oregonian writing to express my strong support for HB 2995, which proposes the establishment of the Task Force on Reparations. I am incredibly proud of my family's legacy in Oregon as educators in Portland's community. From Texas to Portland, we have made Oregon home for four generations. HB 2995 will benefit families like mine, who chose to leave the Jim Crow South for the Pacific Northwest during the Second Great Migration. HB 2995 is an important first step toward addressing the historical and present systemic injustices faced by Black Oregonians.

Oregon's founding as an exclusionary state is a part of its history not to be forgotten. In 1844, the provisional government passed laws banning Black residents, enforcing compliance through public whippings. These policies aimed to deter Black settlement and have had lasting effects that continue to impact Black communities today. The destruction of Vanport in 1948, Albina displacement, and continued displacement of Black families with gentrification further demonstrate the need for reparative measures to correct these historical injustices.

Reparations are essential for acknowledging the enduring effects of systemic racism. Reparations should encompass more than financial compensation (which many assume is the only goal of reparations), because no dollar amount would be able to remedy generational trauma from the violence of forced displacement and enslavement, which proliferates the present with continued injustice in all aspects of society (economics, housing, justice, education, healthcare, etc). Due to the systemic inequality and associated disproportionate impacts towards Black Americans, reparations must also have a systemic approach. By creating this task force under HB 2995, Oregon is taking a critical step toward acknowledging its past and forging a more equitable future where Black Oregonians can begin to thrive. HB 2995 offers a data driven and comprehensive approach to studying the harms inflicted on Black Oregonians with the goal of developing a meaningful proposal on reparations in Oregon.

While I do not have confidence in Oregon to give reparations, I know the data and research completed under HB 2995 will make an irrefutable case, something that can be used as a policy model nationally. Reparations are not simply about financial compensation; they are about recognition, repair, and restitution for centuries of racial injustice, colonization, and denial of fundamental human rights. I urge the committee to pass HB 2995 and support the formation of the Task Force on Reparations. Addressing these historical and ongoing injustices is an important acknowledgement of the past and an intentional and equitable future for Black Oregonians.

Thank you for considering my comments and allowing this opportunity for public input.

J'reyesha Brannon
4th Generation Black Oregonian