

Tuesday, February 25, 2025

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 writing on behalf of the Health Justice Recovery Alliance (HJRA), a statewide advocacy organization that represents over 100 community providers of substance use disorder (SUD) treatment, harm reduction, and recovery services. We work with culturally and linguistically-specific providers all across Oregon that are helping the communities most impacted by racist drug war policies to heal and find a supportive path to recovery. I am writing to express our strong support for HB 2995, which proposes the establishment of the Task Force on Reparations. This initiative is a crucial step toward addressing the historical and systemic injustices faced by Black Oregonians.

Reparations are essential for acknowledging and rectifying the enduring effects of systemic racism. They encompass more than financial compensation; they involve restoring what was unjustly taken, providing access to opportunities for generational wealth, and affirming the dignity of Black Oregonians. Reparations attempt to address the numerous human rights violations that have impacted Black lives and livelihoods, including segregation, displacement, redlining, and economic disparities. Many assume reparations only refer to compensation for the harms of slavery. However, the inhumane treatment of Black people continued long after slavery's abolition. Policies such as voter suppression, employment discrimination, and displacement from historically Black neighborhoods in Oregon have perpetuated systemic inequalities. HB 2995 recognizes these ongoing injustices and seeks to address them through a structured, research-based approach.

Oregon's founding as an exclusionary state is a dark part of its history. In 1844, the provisional government passed laws banning Black residents, enforcing compliance through violent punishments such as 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 not simply about financial compensation; they are about recognition, repair, and restitution for centuries of racial injustice, colonization, and denial of fundamental human rights. By creating this task force, Oregon is taking a critical step toward rectifying its past and forging a more equitable future. HB 2995 offers a data driven and comprehensive approach to studying the harms inflicted on Black Oregonians with a goal to make a meaningful proposal on reparations in Oregon.

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 equitable future for Black Oregonians.

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

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Executive Director  
Health Justice Recovery Alliance



