

Mariam Ukbazghi
Portland, OR 97239

February 25, 2025

RE: House Bill 2995

Dear Chair Members of the House Committee on Emergency Management, General Government, and Veterans,

My name is Mariam Ukbazghi and I am writing to the Oregon Legislature in support of House Bill 2995. As a first-generation Eritrean immigrant woman, my family came to this country in search of a better life, only to face numerous challenges related to racial discrimination. While I may not personally qualify for reparations as a Black immigrant who does not descend from slaves in the United States, I fully support this bill. Research indicates that immigrant Black women often experience lower maternal mortality rates than their U.S.-born Black counterparts. This significant contrast underscores the urgent need for justice for African Americans in Oregon, who deserve compensation for the profound trauma and fractured family ties resulting from the institution of slavery.

For generations, Black communities in Oregon have faced entrenched systemic barriers stemming from a long history of discriminatory policies. These unjust laws, which once barred Black individuals from property ownership and full participation in civic life, have left profound wounds. The lingering effects of these historical injustices can still be felt today, manifesting in issues like redlining, gentrification, insufficient funding for schools, housing insecurity, food deserts, health disparities, and imbalances within the judicial system and prison populations. These challenges not only impact those directly affected but also threaten the well-being of future generations, including my own.

House Bill 2995 represents a pivotal opportunity to establish a formal framework for recognizing and addressing the historical injustices faced by African American Oregonians, that have been long overdue. I urge you to champion this bill and firmly advocate for justice, equity, and reconciliation for our communities.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter.

With gratitude,

Mariam