

Submitter: Garland Dunlap

On Behalf Of:

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

Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB2995

Dear Chair Tran, Vice-Chair Grayber, Vice-Chair Lewis, and Members of the Committee,

In 1844, Oregon passed a Black exclusion law, banning Black people from living in the state under the threat of violence and forced labor. Nearly a century later, redlining policies ensured Black families could not secure home loans in many parts of the country, including Oregon. Though these policies no longer exist, their impact remains. A 2022 Federal Reserve report found that the median Black household holds one-sixth the wealth of the median white household, even when accounting for income and education.

This is not ancient history. It shaped the economic landscape Black Oregonians navigate today. HB 2995 provides an opportunity not to rewrite the past but to respond to its consequences with clarity and integrity. HB 2995 does not mandate reparations. It creates a Task Force on Reparations to assess the impact of racial exclusion and propose solutions based on evidence. Oregon has acknowledged its past injustices, but acknowledgment alone does not restore lost opportunities or economic security. If we believe in justice, we must examine the truth and act accordingly.

Other states have already taken steps in this direction. Evanston, Illinois, established a reparations program to address housing discrimination. California's Reparations Task Force conducted an extensive study to quantify the generational impact of racial policies. Oregon can build on these models and craft an approach suited to its own history and needs. Some argue that now is not the time. But delaying action does not erase injustice—it prolongs its consequences. The Oregon Racial Disparities Report (2023) found that Black Oregonians experience higher rates of housing insecurity, unemployment, and underrepresentation in high-wage industries. These disparities weaken Oregon's economy, reduce tax revenue, and increase reliance on social services. If we fail to act, these disparities will persist.

HB 2995 is not about division. It is about responsibility and building a future that reflects Oregon's highest ideals. Justice requires commitment, reflection, and action. This bill will not undo the past, but it ensures we do not ignore its effects. I urge this committee to vote in favor of HB 2995 and take a meaningful step toward justice.

Thank you for your time and consideration.